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HOW BLACK LIVES MATTER HAS INFLUENCED AND
INTERACTED WITH GLOBAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

by

ARELLE BINNING

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

How Black Lives Matter Has Influenced and Interacted with

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by

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Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a chapter-based and member-led organization created out of grief by three queer black women. This thesis examines the international impact of BLM. I conducted telephone interviews with activists and advocacy organizations who have organized activist networks and/or won struggles against institutional racism outside of the United States. These activists are located in Kenya, South Africa, Brazil, Australia, India, Spain, The Netherlands, Sweden, and Paris. I conclude that BLM has inspired the creation and supported the continued development of organizations advocating for national and transnational social and racial justice on a global scale. BLM in spite of its imperfections, is the "social justice yellow brick road" helping to build a path toward, what political activist Angela Davis conceptualizes as, "intersectionality of movements," or the joining of different struggles to strengthen each fight against oppression.

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Introduction
Black Lives Matter: “The Social Justice Yellow Brick Road”

Trauma, violence, and oppression live on and through our bodies limiting our experience, our connection and choice.¹

Healing Justice Reason #1

In her book, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*, Angela Y. Davis asks the question “how do we talk about bringing various social justice struggles together, across national borders?”² Davis’ question helps to also define what she conceptualizes as “intersectionality of movements”³ – which according to her is the coalescence of different struggles with the acknowledgment that “nothing happens in isolation.”⁴ In the aftermath of the acquittal of neighborhood watch coordinator George Zimmerman in the unprovoked 2012 fatal shooting of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, in grief, created the Twitter hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Significantly burgeoning after the 2014 fatal shooting of teenager Michael Brown in Missouri by Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson, #BlackLivesMatter has transformed with the direction of queer black women, into the Black Lives Matter movement⁵ (BLM) with over 40 chapters. While much has been studied about the local influence, this thesis will demonstrate the global impact of BLM through its ability to inspire the creation and support the continued development, of organizations advocating for national and transnational social and racial justice on a global scale, and how it has proven the impetus in the move forward to Davis’ definition of “intersectionality of movements” in the 21st Century.

Created by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, BLM website specifically states that the organization is “a chapter-based, member-led organization whose mission is to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and

vigilantes.”⁶ A bold statement, beginning as an online campaign in 2013 with “a call to action in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism,” BLM has ultimately become the decentralized face of collective activism resulting in “ousted anti-Black politicians...critical legislation to benefit Black lives, and changed...terms of the debate on Blackness around the world.” Indeed, the organization fights to ensure that black lives do in fact matter and by living and displaying guiding principles such as diversity, restorative justice, globalism, queer affirming, unapologetically black, collective value, empathy, loving engagement, transgender affirming, black villages, and intergenerational, BLM prides itself in being an “inclusive and spacious movement”⁷ by “defend[ing] economic, social, and political power for all people.”⁸

After speaking with activists and organizations, in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Europe, this thesis will make four main claims that ultimately prove, ironically, that BLM, though a decentralized movement, can be viewed as the centralized “social justice yellow brick road” that leads to international intersectionality of movements. Developing this metaphor, I demonstrate how each pocket of advocacy, or each connecting brick on the road, no matter its size or shape, requests to be leveled with the next so that they all fit snugged within the expanding give-and-take outlines of BLM. Since its publication in 1900, though there have been many adaptations of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, few aspects remain the same in each adaptation – a yellow brick road and the “quadrants,” or countries, of Oz itself. Written by Lyman Frank Baum, this children’s novel follows protagonist Dorothy and her little dog Toto on a journey to meet the famous Wizard of Oz. Traveling solely on the “yellow brick road,” Dorothy visits all countries in Oz and while on her journey she meets some wonderful characters on the way. Ultimately, even though they all desire different things, they are all able to help each other to their destination to finally get what their hearts desire. The Library of Congress notes that this is “America's greatest

and best-loved homegrown fairytale.”⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, several adaptations of this story were considered to explain how America’s “homegrown” BLM can be seen as the “social justice yellow brick road” to intersectionality of movements. By using this metaphor, I explain the three main reasons for, and benefits of, “intersectionality.” **First**, it demonstrates how each continent represents an indispensable stop on the journey towards intersectionality of movements; **second** it demonstrates why and how advocacy organizations and activists on each continent must work together, by encouraging and understanding each other's needs, to fully complete their individual journeys against oppression; and **third** it demonstrates that by joining forces each organization and activist, and their corresponding advocacies, will become newfangled bricks on this yellow brick road.

The **first claim** of this thesis is that BLM has connected with and directly influenced organizations and individual activists on five continents who have achieved either the successful, organization of activist institutions, overturning of existing institutional racism, or both, by either working directly with these organizations or by inspiring them through social media or traditional media outlets, making it a truly global platform. In Africa, veteran activists express the impact the movement had on feelings of international solidarity and on feminism in Africa but also express how important it is that BLM learn from their “brothers and sisters” in Africa. Kenyan veteran grassroots women’s rights activist and feminist activist, Rachael Mwikali heard the cries of BLM and was encouraged by the women co-creators.¹⁰ South African activist and #RhodesMustFall school decolonization campaign’s Wandile Kasibe, having worked with BLM in South Africa, declares that BLM was successful in sending the message that international solidarity with the oppressed people of the world is a necessity.¹¹ In the Americas, activists testify about how BLM helped in the continuation of a blooming cultural renaissance where many explore black liberation

and fight to stop police violence in the favelas, or ghettos, and throughout Brazil. In Asia, an Indian caste system is challenged by the lowest caste members – the Dalits – and by activists who admit that BLM was a direct influence on a major advocacy group formation. In Australia, as Indigenous and Aboriginal rights require ongoing advocacy to ensure that the culture and heritage of the First Nation peoples are not forgotten or left out of the social justice discourse, BLM emerged as an encouraging, and Sydney Peace Prize winning, element in their ongoing fight. Chairwoman of the Australian South Sea Islanders-Port Jackson, Emelda Davis, was encouraged by the “refreshing” cry itself that black lives matter, because to her and many others they actually do, inspiring her to host a forum with BLM co-founders.¹² Australian writer and activist, Bridget Harilaou, championed BLM’s “global reach and media virality” and its “articulate” voice in the education of the race discrimination experienced by “Blak,” or Aboriginal, people in Australia.¹³ Anticolonial Asian Alliance media and public relations manager, Kenji Khozoei was fascinated by the movement’s ability to “disrupt the standard media models and put things in front of people in a way that hadn’t been done before.”¹⁴ Lastly, in Europe, as migrant and immigrant rights become tangled in a web of racism and discrimination, BLM stepped in and administered workshops to demonstrate how to better strategize regarding social justice organizing. Having worked directly with BLM co-founders and emboldened by BLM’s unapologetic nature, Executive Director of the European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD), Esther Mamadou, in Spain, recognized BLM’s ability to inspire the youth.¹⁵ ENPAD co-founder, Michael McEachrane, expressed the “excitement and inspiration” felt throughout Sweden at the visual of Black Lives Matter mass protests and declared it to be a “signal” for black mobilization everywhere.¹⁶ The Netherlands’ The Black Archives co-founder, Jessica de Abreu, and ENPAD member, acknowledged that BLM became a symbol for black communities globally to address racism,

noting that the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter is continuously used beyond its original call to end police brutality.¹⁷ Lastly, Paris' Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR) member, Selim Nadi, observed the “‘lights’ of antiracism” on, or the attention given to, the movement.¹⁸

The **second claim** of this thesis is that each activist or organization believes that the rallying cry, that "black lives matter," has sent irreversible and impactful waves across the world inspiring the creation of several social organizations advocating for national and transnational social and racial justice. In Brazil, Brasil Solidarity Network co-founder, Colin Miller, affirmed that BLM was “responsible for breaking the mold of respectability politics [and] bringing back the importance of direct action” in America and in Brazil, inspiring the creation of his own network and the Vidas Negras Importam movement.¹⁹ Brazil Police Watch activist, John Selders, Jr. was impressed by the movement’s ability to connect the youth and elders and foster the creation of the Favela Lives Matter campaign.²⁰ Federal University of Ceará in Brazil professor, Geísa Mattos noted the way the BLM movement “spread through social media.”²¹ In India, South Asian Minorities Lawyers Association (SAMLA) President, Mehmood Pracha, hearing the cries of the movement concluded that, in his opinion, compared to a kind of “one sided operation” of the Civil Rights Era, BLM, “fearless,” is instead an actual “battle” for rights, inspiring the creation of the Dalit Minority Tribal Lives Matter campaign.²² Co-editor of *The Radical in Ambedkar: Critical Reflections* and India’s first Dalit Ph.D. holder from an African university, Suraj Yengde, was inspired by, and still admires, the “radical” decentralization of BLM where the threat of a potential assassinated leader no longer exists.²³

The **third claim** of this thesis is that on advice from the interviewees, BLM, though it has come a long way, must expand to include the rallying cries of the activists and organizations that it inspires or interacts with, to truly be intersectional. With advice from several of the interviewed

activists and organizations that this expansion can only take place by including and acknowledging varying agendas, BLM, who agrees with this claim on their website, has been challenged by the international activist community to abandon its U.S. centralism and adopt a more inclusive program. In South Africa and Kenya, the movement is asked to remember that intersectionality must include a reciprocal and transparent agenda. In Brazil, the movement is advised to move past protests into substantial change and continue a “global dialogue” with all who are interested, calling attention to similar cases of abuse in other countries. In India, its recommended that the movement “de-Americanize” to increase its numbers globally. In Australia, the movement is asked to include respect and justice for Aboriginal people of the world on their agenda. Lastly, in France, Spain, Sweden and The Netherlands, the movement is encouraged to work collaboratively with other nations on all platforms to, amongst other things, get a better understanding of what “blackness” means in different regions of the world irrespective of the types of marginalization.

The **fourth claim** this thesis makes is that by holding BLM responsible for incorporating each agenda into its own agenda, it becomes the beacon of hope, flaws and all, for all those advocating for the oppressed people of the world, or similar to what South African activist Wandile Kasibe describes as the “overarching” agenda.²⁴ This thesis will, in part, use the “social justice yellow brick road” to illustrate this claim. As Michael McEachrane notes, that while African Americans suffer a great deal due to racial injustices, it is important to keep in mind that accessibility to resources, makes BLM activists “privileged” and subsequently they have a “responsibility” to do as much as they can to contribute to a more pan-African or International global connection.²⁵ For instance, the shared opinion from interviews on each continent of the world suggest that access to an unbiased media is an advantage of BLM, and therefore a “responsibility” of the movement. Outside of “intersectionality of movements,” this thesis does

not suggest what paths BLM should take to fully comply with such a responsibility, but instead offers the critiques of the international social justice community on how it can transform into a true global movement.

I begin my thesis with an analysis of the history of race relations in America that have led to the creation of BLM, and then discuss what authors and scholars have to say about “intersectionality of movements” in an international setting. Next, beginning from Africa and ending with Europe, this thesis will explore the history of oppression in the country of each interviewee. The methodology used for this thesis began with the specific selection of activists or organizations who are not official chapters of BLM but have openly expressed their inspiration by, or connection to, BLM, via a media outlet or forum, followed by direct contact and confirmation of those expressions. Once all expressions were confirmed I requested to speak with each activist or organization telephonically, specifically through WhatsApp, ultimately seeking to delve deeper into the true influence of BLM on these different advocacy groups. With different time zones to be considered, scheduling each conversation, although strenuous at times, helped to reinforce the idea of what it means to truly be global – recognizing that life keeps going, as we sleep, in a world that we sometimes forget is out there.

In building the foundation for the yellow brick road, I think it’s important to understand and acknowledge the “trauma,” that affects the present-day lives of marginalized populations, as a legitimate result of oppression. In this recognition, I believe we can be united in our oppressions on the journey towards intersectionality. According to black queer activist, sound healer, director of the Audre Lourde Project, and co-founder of the Kindred Healing Justice Collective, Cara Page,²⁶ “healing justice” helps to address this trauma by providing a “framework that identifies how we can holistically respond to and intervene on generational trauma and violence and to bring

collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, hearts and minds. Through this framework we continue to build political and philosophical convergences of healing inside of liberation movements and organizations.” Believing in the “revolutionary” power “healing justice” yields in “confronting the capitalist, colonial, individualistic paradigms that tell us we are alone when we seek out healing,” the Young Women’s Empowerment Project and the Chicago Healing Justice Learning Circle declare that it is also a “reminder” that “the concept of action should be expanded to support the self-determination, interdependence, resilience & resistance of those most impacted by oppression.”²⁷ For this reason, and in no particular order, I begin each chapter with a “healing justice” reason listed on the BLM website.

With all interviewees agreeing that colonization and white supremacy set, and continues to hold, respectively, many nations’ oppressed people in the positions that they are in today, it was revealed, through the question of the importance of race in BLM, that advocacy against oppression often goes beyond race and journeys into oppressions based on caste, class, religion, culture & heritage, gender, and immigration. Questioning each activist and organization about the influence of the African American struggle, with one or two oppositions, we arrive at the conclusion that the African American struggle is in fact a primary source of inspiration. In a quest to find solutions to this lack of intersectionality, questions were asked that touched on the necessities for BLM to fully transform into an intersectional movement. Many interviewees voicing the lack of accessibility of the network to grass roots organizations while others requested their agendas to be include on the BLM agenda are amongst the solutions for expansion. Discovering, through questions about the media’s influence on BLM, that many countries have restrictive media outlets that stifle their social justice voices reveals the reality of the threat international connections on social justice pose in

many parts of the world. A threat that became real as people testified to the real dangers of the nature of their work and as potential interviewees explained their real time battles with the law in their country over their activism. Ultimately, the responses to these questions reveal the desire for and utmost importance of strong global connections in true revolution and change on the yellow brick road.

Literature Survey: What Made this Road Yellow - Black Lives Matter Past and Proposed Future

Healing justice and transformative justice remind us that conflict can be generative and a way to care for each other and learn more about our needs and boundaries.¹

Healing Justice Reason #4

Where much has been written and discussed on what has led to the inception of BLM and of its local impact, by taking a journey through literature, with race-relations in America being the guiding light, a clear understanding, given that there is no information available, of where the movement will ultimately need to be globally can be revealed. Black Lives Matter Global Network co-founder, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, in her memoir *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*, shares with her audience Alicia Garza's Facebook post on the acquittal of neighborhood watch coordinator George Zimmerman in the shooting death of teenager Trayvon Martin. Garza writes, "btw stop saying that we are not surprised. that's a damn shame in itself. I continue to be surprised at how little Black lives matter. And I will continue that. stop giving up on black life. black people, I will NEVER give up on us. NEVER."² It was in response to this post that Patrisse Khan-Cullors responded with #BlackLivesMatter for the first time.³ Khan-Cullors' memoir is a call to her audience to stop being complacent with a society that demonstrates that it doesn't value any one particular group of lives, be it African-American or those with mental health conditions. In her discussion of the birth of #BlackLivesMatter, Khan-Cullors also discusses her experiences with this devaluing in a society where "literally breathing while Black became cause for arrest—or worse."⁴ Khan-Cullors notes that her experiences are so potent that "by the time Black Lives Matter is born" the devaluing of black life is ascertainable."⁵ She writes that it was at the age of twelve that she learned that her race and socio-economic status were more important than anything else she would ever have to offer.⁵ Similar to the experience of a child born into the

Dalit caste or in the favelas of Brazil, a destiny of designated worthlessness awaits many African Americans.

Philosopher Hannah Arendt, in her book *On Violence*, states that “the climax of terror is reached when the police state begins to devour its own children, when yesterday’s executioner becomes today’s victim.”⁶ As a youth, Khan-Cullors witnessed the extent of the police state as she experienced the constant police harassment of herself, and her siblings – Monte, Paul, and Jasmine.⁷ Khan-Cullors writes that the “extraordinary presence” of police in black and brown communities was, and still is on account of former U.S. President Richard Nixon’s War on Drug’s assault on black and brown communities.⁸ Linking the War on Drugs to the mass incarceration problem that plagues black and brown communities in America, as it does for the Indigenous and Aboriginal people in Australia, Michelle Alexander, in her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, makes the argument that the War on Drugs and the subsequent police state is an attack on black and brown communities, where Khan-Cullors was born and raised, in the form of “genocide” of such communities.⁹ Khan-Cullors, in line with Alexander, further makes the argument that the War on Drugs is a form of “ethnic cleansing”¹⁰ where incarceration of both black mothers and fathers made life “entirely unsafe.”¹¹ Here, both Alexander and Khan-Cullors acknowledge the tremendous effects the War on Drugs and the subsequent police state have had on black communities, whereby the end justifies the means – that end being the devaluing of black life.

Further developing the concept, and reality, of devaluing black life, Khan-Cullors writes that we currently live in a world where “Black humanity” is made “invisible.”¹² Alluding to the “intersectionality of movements,” she makes the argument that if it is possible to get society to value black lives, then others, who have been traditionally devalued, will have a chance at having

their value recognized as well.¹³ Turning her attention to the criminal justice system, Khan-Cullors question's the current criminal justice system that would label her brother Monte a "terrorist" and incarcerate him as such, instead of provide care for his obvious mental health issues. While she encourages her audience to question the criminal justice system as well, troubled by having to ask these questions in the first place, she also asks "what kind of society do we live in?"¹⁴ and "why is America so tethered to punishment and judgment, to one life mattering and another not?"¹⁵ As is the case in Brazil, where prosecution of a police officer who fatally wounds a young black man is a challenge in and of itself.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor offers an answer to Khan-Cullors' question in her book *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Particularly, Taylor argues that racist stereotypes, that give the impression that black and brown people are responsible for their own historical plight, have been institutionalized and perpetuate the continued and unjustified killings of black and brown people.¹⁶ According to Taylor, institutionalized racism, "or structural racism, can be defined as the policies, programs, and practices of public and private institutions that result in greater rates of poverty, dispossession, criminalization, illness, and ultimately mortality of African Americans."¹⁷ Further, Taylor emphasizes that we must truly grasp the meaning of institutionalized racism in order to understand that the current state of black and brown communities in America.¹⁸ Specifically, institutionalized racism, and not black and brown people themselves, is responsible for the historic plight of black and brown people and communities. Former President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1967 Federal Kerner Commission, after having interviewed "black people in every city"¹⁹ compiled their results in "The Kerner Commission report," which stated that poverty in black communities was due in part to "white racism."²⁰ The report also concluded that the society at the time was becoming estranged on the basis of race. It

explicitly read: “this is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”²¹ Taylor further states that being black is the only thing that African Americans are responsible for. She writes that the unjustified deaths of black and brown people stand as proof that skin color “can make you a suspect—or get you killed.”²² Khan-Cullors, having the same take as Taylor, also states how unsettling it is for black and brown people that somehow the “idea that your very existence, the brown of your skin, is enough to get you snatched up...to get you killed.”²³

Khan-Cullors then asks her audience to question what the aftereffect is for a lifetime of such devaluing and unjust treatment.²⁴ Ta-Nehisi Coates gives a genuine response to Khan-Cullors’ question in his book, *Between the World and Me*. Coates writes a heartfelt letter to his own son, with hopes of guiding him on the expectations of being black in a society that brandishes an “assumed inhumanity of black people.”²⁵ According to Coates, loss of control over the black body is the result of a lifetime of such unjust treatment, conceptualizing this loss of control as the “philosophy of the disembodied.”²⁶ This philosophy a fitting one for Australia’s First Nations Peoples who, after years of colonization and indentured servitude, still search for their family histories. He expresses the strength and seriousness of such a philosophy by using the love of a black parent for their child, in that these parents would rather take their own child’s life before an external source does.²⁷ Coates directly states that being “disembodied” makes black and brown people desperate for some sort of control even if it means taking their own children’s lives.²⁸ Khan-Cullors, asking her audience to consider that black and brown children are caught in societal, and as a result criminal, system at no fault of their own,²⁹ gives her audience a series of thoughtful questions so that they can comprehend this love that Coates touches on while questioning the society they live in,

Is this what it is to be a mother who has to carry the weight of having to protect her children in a world that is conspiring to kill them? Are you forced to exist within a terrible trinary of emotion: rage, grief or guilt? What of the joy and the peace that loving a child brings? What of pride and of hope? Could it really be true that my mother has been given no door number four or five or six or even seven to walk through in order to know the wholeness of motherhood? Is she one in a long line of Black mothers limited to survival mode or grief?³⁰

While Coates advises his son that he will have to one day “make...peace with the chaos” he commands that while his son does this he “cannot lie” to himself about the nature of disembodiment of the past, present, and future.³¹ In a statement that is sympathetic to Coates’ form of pessimism, Khan-Cullors states that she understands the attitude that forms within a person that is disembodied, explaining that it creates an attitude of “dismisses hope” and “discards dreams.”³² Further, Coates, insisting to his son that he “is not a cynic,” informs his son that it is ultimately not his responsibility to change society.³¹ In contrast, Khan-Cullors challenges her audience to be on the front line fighting for a just world, with an ultimate ending of freedom and a life “beyond fear,” and that “end[s] the occupation of our bodies and souls” by a society whose actions prove that black and brown bodies don’t have value.³³ A similar sentiment felt by South Africans who have noted that generally black people constantly “fight to call [their] souls [their] own.” To achieve this goal, Khan-Cullors describes the power of starting small but bold – as small as a Twitter hashtag.³⁴ Similar to a Combahee River Collective statement made by co-author Barbara Smith where she states that “grassroots organizations...really make a difference in the landscape and in the political possibilities ,³⁵ Ms. Angela Y. Davis states, in *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, that “grassroots activism” is fundamental and ultimately “the most important ingredient of building

radical movements.”³⁶

Although Khan-Cullors’ #BlackLivesMatter was a small innocent start, the Ferguson protests propelled the hashtag into being the “focal point for the growing anger in Black communities.”³⁷ On her discussion of Ferguson Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, in her book *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, highlights that the killing of Mike Brown allowed black and brown people to see that acceptance of their own disembodiments could also prove deadly and that “simply doing the ‘right things,’ whatever those things might be, could overcome the perennial crises within Black America.”³⁸ Further, Taylor makes the argument that Ferguson became the catalyst for an abrupt reality check of a society built on the disembodiment of black and brown bodies. She states,

The explosion in Ferguson and the nationwide protests have deepened the political crisis, shattered the “postracial” proclamations, and inspired others to rise up against a worsening epidemic of police harassment, brutality, corruption, and murder that threatens to snatch the lives and personhood of untold numbers of African Americans in every city and suburb.³⁹

Discussing the battle, between the activists of old and the younger Ferguson activists, for control over producing a movement and march that were representative of the people, Taylor highlights that while both marches were successful in “giving the movement its first profile as a national phenomenon” it was made clear that Black Lives Matter was taking a different path in the organization of their movement.⁴⁰ While the traditional activists groups were led by men, Taylor highlights that “in Ferguson, these emerging politics were embodied by the emergence of young Black women as a central organizing force,”⁴¹ a fact that inspires activists even in Kenya. This argument is akin to Angela Y. Davis’ argument in *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* that “Black

feminism” is instrumental⁴² and as Taylor argues, they have helped society understand the previously discussed “impact” the police state has had on black and brown communities.⁴³ Black feminism proving to be instrumental in the African American fight, it is expected that many across the world feel that the African American struggle is consensually an inspiration in many “silos” of global social justice advocacy.

While the victory of the Ferguson movement was monumental, Taylor, arguing that next steps need to be identified, asks her audience “how do you move from protest to movement?”⁴⁴ She further states that while “a feeling of pride and combativeness” has been sparked by BLM Movement, validating the transformative power of the protests, “for it to become more even more effective, to affect the policing state, and to withstand opposition and attempts to infiltrate, subvert, and undermine what has been built, there must be more organization and coordination in the move from protest to movement.”⁴⁵ Taylor’s solutions, to move from protest to movement, wind up requiring an approach comparable to Angela Davis’ call for “intersectionality of movements.” In *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, Angela Y. Davis argues that we are unfortunately “still faced with the challenge of understanding the complex ways race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and ability are intertwined—but also how we move beyond these categories to understand the interrelationships of ideas and processes that seem to be separate and unrelated.”⁴⁶ That is to say, we need improvement in identifying what element bring us together with regards to our respective struggles. Davis makes the claim that an international aspect is the missing element. She writes, “Ferguson reminds us that we have to globalize our thinking about these issues. And if I were to be critical in a friendly way of the text, I would say that what it lacks is a global context, an international framework.”⁴⁷ In fact, Khan Cullors mentions that when video of the Ferguson protests made international news she finally felt the impact of their hard work. She writes, “The

video of our disruption makes international headlines. It is the first time I think I really understand the impact we are having.”⁴⁸ Across the world in Australia, impact of real-time events streamed through social media was considered a bold and powerful “disruption” to traditional media news outlets.

Taylor notes that realizing that there is value in black life is so significant that it is more important than just addressing any single issue separately. Also mentioning a few things that would indicate an acknowledgement of the value in black life, she states,

The #BlackLivesMatter movement goes beyond a call to end police brutality and murder against Black people—it is a recognition that Black life is valuable while it is still being lived. Valuing Black life means Black people should have access to their basic human dignity at their workplace—especially Black youth who are disproportionately impacted by unemployment and are over-represented in low-wage jobs.⁴⁹

For Taylor, if this value is to be recognized it must be done so within the context of many struggles. Like Davis, Taylor states, “one important frontier of the movement also involves its capacity to develop solidarity with other oppressed groups of people.”⁵⁰ Taylor warns her audience against believing that their own struggles are so exclusive that any possible relation to another struggle is impractical. She states, “It is one thing to respect the organizing that has gone into the movement against police violence and brutality, but quite another to conceive of Black oppression and anti-Black racism as so wholly unique that they are beyond the realm of understanding and, potentially, solidarity from others who are oppressed.”⁵¹ Taylor also contends that many victories will be trivial if the contrast in struggles blinds the fundamental power in the interconnecting of struggles. She writes, “in the contest to demonstrate how oppressions differ from one group to the next, we miss how we are connected through oppression—and how those connections should form the basis of

solidarity, not a celebration of our lives on the margins.”⁵² So, connect we must.

Chapter 1: Munchkin Country: Africa - Kenya and South Africa

The trauma Black people feel is compounded, often constant and complex. Building a world that creates space and time for Black people to heal and limits the trauma they experience requires a deep reworking and reimagining of relationships and institutions.¹

Healing Justice Reason #6

Our journey towards international intersectionality of movements on the “social justice yellow brick road” begins in Munchkin Country, which linked to Emerald City, is described as “rich, beautiful, fertile and pleasant.”² This country is the continent of Africa. Demonstrated by first looking at the current relationship between BLM and African activism, an irregular relationship is revealed where Africa is often left out of the Black Lives Matter discourse. Speaking with veteran South African activist and University of Cape Town Ph.D. candidate in sociology, Wandile Kasibe, it becomes clear that while BLM was effective in attracting the attention and sympathies of African people, transparency and reciprocity needs to be a part of the blueprint for creating lasting connections and true intersectionality. Further, speaking with Kenyan veteran grassroots women’s rights activist and gender activist, Rachael Mwikali, she confirms that “authentic solidarity” requires an inclusive and respectful space where every matter brought to the table is valued.

Malcolm X, in his “observer” capacity at the Cairo, Egypt meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), made a bold plea to the African states “in the interests of world peace and security” to have the independent African leaders endorse a United Nations Commission on Human Rights investigation into the “deteriorating plight” of African Americans.³ In his memorandum, Malcolm X argued that Africans will not be “recognized” and “treated with respect” unless the African American is as well – explicitly stating that, “African problems are our problems and our problems are African problems.”⁴ At present, the African Union (formerly the OAU) has

not made much progress in efforts to “mainstream the African diaspora” into its agenda, therefore leaving support for and solidarity with BLM on the fringes.⁵ In contrast, in her *Urban Education* article, “Do African Lives Matter to Black Lives Matter? Youth Uprisings and the Borders of Solidarity,” University of Pennsylvania Literacy, Culture, and International Education Division Assistant Professor, Dr. Krystal Strong states that “Africa is consistently absent from the analysis and explicit concerns of the M4BL [Movement for Black Lives], despite similarly being in the midst of an upsurge of popular resistance.”⁶ This idea is one that has a familiar echo of the lack of “intergenerational progress” between Africans and African Americans – simply put, Africans and African-Americans lack support for each other’s struggles.⁷

The Movement for Black Lives with over 50 member organizations, which includes BLM, was designed to stand in solidarity against the rampant and “visible” violence against Black communities in the United States,⁸ but for Dr. Strong, the “particularism” of the Movement for Black Lives, and their lack of expansion internationally, is an issue that is large enough to “undercut” its true potential.⁹ Currently, with examples such as Occupy Nigeria and South Africa’s #FeesMustFall, a clear shift is taking place, and according to Dr. Strong, this is taking place in both a “generational” and “ideological” context.¹⁰ Further, she states that “transnational forms of solidarity” as well as “broad movement building throughout the Black Diaspora” are also taking place.¹¹ At present, with an ultimate goal of having black life valued, and a unfathomed salute to Malcom X’s words, Africans have associated themselves with BLM while BLM has shown support for many of the movements in Africa.

Speaking with veteran South African activist and University of Cape Town Ph.D. candidate in sociology, Wandile Kasibe, he confirmed that he was involved in the formation, on March 9, 2015, of the successful and prevalent South African #RhodesMustFall movement,¹² which,

inspired by the pain of black South Africans, became an international movement to “decolonize education.”¹³ The #RhodesMustFall movement was successful in overturning an existing element of South African institutional racism. Centered, and sitting atop the land that he donated to the University of Cape Town, the Bronze statue of Cecil Rhodes, a British imperialist,¹⁴ who “stimulated South Africa’s economy, but at the expense of the subjugation of Black people for the provision of cheap labour,” was seen as a representation of “white supremacy, institutional racism, Black oppression and patriarchy,” by the #RhodesMustFall movement protestors, or “Fallist.” On April 9, 2015, the statue was removed after a series of “protests, intense discourses, marches, sit-ins, and a dialogue,” by “Fallist” over the statue’s legitimacy.¹⁵

Hailing from a tradition of African black consciousness and black pride, Kasibe believes that BLM was, in its inception and still is today, instrumental in “creating strong solidarity amongst the oppressed globally [and] black people [all over the world].” For him, the movement brings to the attention that “scientific racism” is still a global threat that “eats into the fiber of humanity.” Kasibe also contends that BLM was successful in sending the message that “nations of the world must stand in solidarity with those who suffer [and] who are the victims of racism globally.” Most important about the movement to Kasibe is the idea that black people from all different countries and walks of life, can identify a “common enemy.” This common enemy, in his opinion, being “white supremacy” against black people who in general “fight to call [their] souls [their] own” by showing that “our lives actually matter.” Referring to racism as a “cancer” that “imprisons our modern thinking,” Kasibe notes that BLM highlights “important raptures” – or collective calls to end such things as institutional racism – such as protests, in the unfolding processes of history seeking to eliminate this racism and other forms of oppression. Additionally, for him, BLM “brings to our attention the important trajectories of how we deal with various forms of oppression.”¹⁶

When asked about his motivation for organizing a protest march in response to the killing of Alton Sterling, Kasibe explained that by virtue of just being black “the pain of one black person resonates with millions of blacks across the world...[and of course is] felt even in South Africa.” He added that while South Africans are not physically present they manage to connect with various oppressed people of the world through different means like social media. For Kasibe, South Africans are more concerned with, and conscious about, connecting with their fellow “comrades” and with “formations” that are either similar to BLM or movements whose goals are to highlight the black plight. Recalling that about three years ago the “anti-colonial” #RhodesMustFall movement hosted members of BLM in South Africa, Kasibe highlighted that during this time they shared strategies and experiences on how they “should deal with the challenges that face us – because the challenges that face us are not so different.” Remembering how members of both movements had the opportunity to share their experiences, connect and express their solidarity in South Africa, he emphasized that because of the cultural gaps in African American culture, while there, the BLM members were eager to learn from the South Africans. Kasibe maintains that what created a cohesive bond, and connected BLM to black South Africans, was that historically and presently, both in his opinion are the oppressed people of the world, who may not speak identical languages but speak the common language of oppression. For him, the “language of the oppressed will always be the language that speaks against the oppressor – those who put systems in place to oppress those who are deemed lesser beings.” This interaction between BLM and black South African activists, in Kasibe’s opinion, helped to change the way South Africans look at their own struggle in South Africa, with South Africans now seeing themselves linked to, and not isolated from, other oppressed peoples. On the other hand, while he is aware of this transformation, he argues that amid the #RhodesMustFall movement and other movements happening in South

Africa, there was a lack of pragmatism on the grounds of South Africa with regards to BLM, leaving its impact to be felt only through social media.¹⁷

Highlighting that BLM connects to black people all over the world and referencing South African activist Steve Biko as the “leader of black consciousness in South Africa,” Kasibe notes that connecting struggles is important with it being the responsibility of black people to build global solidarity with the oppressed people of the world. Giving a prime example of the popularity and influence that the #RhodesMustFall movement had, resulting in the removal of several confederate statues throughout the United States, he believes that global solidarity involves reciprocal inspiration in that while South Africans are inspired by others, others can draw inspiration from South Africans. Declaring that people of the world need to organize, Kasibe stressed that black people in general need to learn to “build on” and “invest in” these solidarities and continue forward keeping in mind that history provided an opportunity to “defend and to act against... [notions that seek to] oppress black people.”¹⁸

Speaking also with Kenyan veteran grassroots women’s rights activist and gender activist, Rachael Mwikali, she testified that, as a black woman and having viewed the killings and victimization of black women in the US, although she is in Kenya she feels the impact of the pain even across the world.¹⁹ For her, seeing her brothers and sisters in Kenya organizing in solidarity with African Americans inspired, and still inspires, her. In Mwikali’s opinion, BLM has increased the amount of people talking about and contributing to black feminism in Kenya.²⁰ Born and raised in the “informal settlement of Mathare, Nairobi,” Mwikali is the current leader of the Coalition for Grassroots Human Rights Defenders Kenya formed in 2016 – “a social movement for the grassroots activists and human rights defenders in Kenya” that has grown and spread throughout Kenya – and coordinator of a Pan-African Grassroots Women Liberation Movement – a movement

working towards unity amongst “grassroots African women...empowering them to take up leadership positions,”²¹ along with fostering movement building and social justice. Expressing her gratitude for and acknowledging the risks that come with activism in Kenya, Mwikali testifies to “fighting patriarchy and violent structures that exists and work against women and girls” in both general and organizing spaces.²² In her successful organization of her fellow Kenyan activists, Mwikali, “co-convicted Nairobi women march in solidarity with Americans sisters, pussy power campaign (Radical way of saying Women Power) with the Swedish school students.” Having been awarded the 2016 We Effect’s Lobbyist for Change Award and having been recognized as an “emerging community champion” by UNHABITAT, Mwikali is one of Kenya’s most prominent activists.²³

Expressing her opinion that BLM is very important, she recalled participating in a BLM campaign during her time in Sweden in 2016. With the declaration that “black lives matter,” Mwikali affirms that it is about “dignifying our lives” and showing that black lives have value. Feeling that the term is very inclusive, she admires that the organization has also included an agenda that sees women as important in terms of organizing. Inspired by the fact that women are running BLM, she is encouraged in her own activism by this idea given that in Kenya she sometimes faces resistance from her own brothers and sisters. The declaration that “black lives matter,” to Mwikali is an opportunity to “name those who are suffering the most,” and in her opinion, to utter the controversial “All Lives Matter” means to “run away from the real issues.”²⁴

With the belief that “authentic solidarity” is important, Mwikali believes that human rights are at the core of all that she does. In discussing the importance of intersectionality, Mwikali highlights the death of Marielle Franco – the first black woman to be elected to city council in Brazil in 20 years who was killed for challenging the system and police killings in Brazil²⁵ –

extends to black women almost as a threat that they will be met with violence in opposition to their activism. For her, if the discourse is about black women and black people then inclusivity is key. Mwikali believes that a movement for intersectionality would have to be “ergonomically formed” and will only work by respecting and looking at all struggles through a human rights angle. In Mwikali’s opinion, the “oppression [faced] is very broad” so it is necessary to transition from fighting for individual struggles to joining forces while respecting what everyone is bringing to the table.²⁶

For Kasibe, BLM resuscitated the dreams of those who came before us.” He believes that many of these struggles have been passed on to us by nature of history. Mentioning the battles of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Panthers, focusing on the plight of black people in the United States, Kasibe declares that today’s movements are not “stand alone” movements but “intergenerational struggles” – which are struggles that are a continuation of the struggles that came before us – which is “another intervention presented by history for us to act in this generation.” With the next generation having its own intervention, he believes that BLM successfully transforms the people who are directly or indirectly involved with it and has used the media as its tool for transformation by “highlighting the politics of being black in an anti-black world.”²⁷ Similarly, Mwikali, also inspired by the Black Panthers movement, believes that the media has helped BLM to allow people to understand what racist atrocities are taking place in America against black people.²⁸

Believing that the atrocities taking place on black bodies in America is a human rights problem due to the devaluation of black life, Mwikali was under the impression that what she dealt with daily was because of her feminism. She only later found out that what she was experiencing was, and still is, in fact racism. On whether race is an important factor in “intersectionality of

movements,” Mwikali, as a black feminist, notices that class and privilege come into play to the degree that activists lose their voices if they aren’t aligned with the large women movement and BLM. In her opinion, in Kenya, a privileged or wealthy, black man or woman has more of a voice than an “unprivileged” woman.²⁹ On the other hand, well versed in racism, Kasibe declares that racism is a sickening disease that some don’t realize is affecting them. He argues that while many oppressed people are aware of the “common enemy” – white supremacy – Kasibe, like Mwikali, also believes that there is a question of class and privilege involved. For him, class is what ultimately divides those who are meant to fight together. In addition to class and privilege, Kasibe, in discussing Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *Declonising the Mind*, notes that the use of colonizing languages and cultures also come into play and help to misalign forces that should have been connected – stating that while it is not necessary for all to speak the same language and have the same culture, there should be a “commonality” present.³⁰

While it has been noted that Africa is left out of the Black Lives Matter discourse, African activists Wandile Kasibe and Rachael Mwikali describe a budding relationship between BLM and Africa. According to both activists, the inspiration and will for a connection is there, along with the tools to connect. While connections are already underway, these connections must be watered accordingly for them to survive.

Chapter 2: Gillikin Country: The Americas - Brazil

Healing justice makes it possible to transform and heal a legacy of trauma for future generations of Black people.¹

Healing Justice Reason #10

Our next stop towards international intersectionality of movements on the “social justice yellow brick road” is Gillikin Country, which according to Gregory Maquire’s novels *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West and Son of a Witch* is depicted as “more prosperous and industrially developed than other regions of Oz.”² This country is the Americas. Discussing Brazil in particular, I begin by discussing Brazil’s history of colorism and bearded racism, and the significance of a promising “cultural renaissance” currently taking place in its fight against rising police and alleged state sanctioned violence towards social justice activists and members of the favelas, or ghettos, of Brazil. Confirming that the creation of Brazil’s Vidas Negras Importam was a result of BLM, Brasil Solidarity Network (also stated as being created out of a direct influence from BLM) co-founder Colin Miller expresses how the movement has impacted Brazilians. Similarly, Trinity College administrator, Pastor, and Bishop, John L. Selders, Jr.’s discussion of the influence of BLM Ferguson protests on the creation of Brazil Police Watch and the Favela Lives Matter campaign, is evidence of the influence of the movement in Brazil. In contrast, Professor of Sociology at the Federal University of Ceará in Brazil, Geísa Mattos, in her research on the connections between “movements against racism and police brutality in Brazil” and “activism in the United States,” finds that there is more connecting to be done between BLM and Brazilian activists.

Edward Telles’ book review, “Black Lives Matter in Brazil Too” discusses, and often critiques, the findings of Michéle Lamont, Graziella Moraes Silva, Jessica S. Wellburn, Nissim Mizrahi, Hanna Herzog and Elisa Reis’ *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and*

Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel. Lamont, et al., interviewed “160 black Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro, 150 African Americans in the New York Area, and 137 members of three racialized groups in Israel.”³ These racialized groups were, “Mizrahi Jews, Ethiopian Jews and Arab Palestinians.”⁴ in pursuit of “what kinds of stigmatizing or discriminatory incidents individuals encounter in each country, how they respond to these occurrences, and what they view as the best strategy—whether individually, collectively, through confrontation, or through self-improvement—for dealing with such events.”⁵ Telles concludes that Lamont, et al.’s study has shown that while “race in Brazil was not important” during the 1980s, today “most Brazilians are now conscious of racism and race is becoming mainstream in Brazilian academia.”⁶ In fact, Telles highlights the collaboration of the “distinguished Brazilian scholars” of *Getting Respect* as certification of “just how important race studies have become in the Brazilian social sciences.”⁷

Telles notes that while on the surface many Brazilians “defend[ed] their racial democracy... social scientists had challenged its central tenets with hard data, and a small black movement denounced racial democracy as nothing more than a fig leaf covering a deep-seated and pernicious racism.”⁸ While some want to maintain that Brazil is a harmonious melting pot of “interracial marriage, friendships and residential integration,”⁹ data has been produced that counters this idea and instead proves that racism is in fact deeply rooted in Brazil’s democracy. In comparing Brazil to the United States, Telles notes that it’s important to keep in mind that “the United States is no longer extremely segregated as it once was, and indexes of average social interaction suggest that it is becoming more like Brazil.”¹⁰ On the other hand, many of the Brazilian respondents noted an “importance of class thinking in producing racial inequality”¹¹ but ultimately, “despite some differences, race and racism continue to bedevil social relations in both countries.”¹² Meaning racism continues to be the main control socioeconomic status in both Brazil

and the United States. Telles further states that the results of this study draws the conclusion that there are more factors outside of race that contribute to discrimination.¹³ For this, Telles notes that there happens to be a “particularly common” problem of stigmatization in Brazil and he discusses the data *Getting Respect* gathers on how Brazilians respond to “their stigmatizers.”¹⁴ Where it was found that in the United States “confrontation [was found] to be most common” in response to discrimination, Brazilians, so to “avoid confirming racial stereotypes” or to “downplay racism,” would dismiss these stigmatizers by either using humor or by using silence followed by an attempt to “educate racists” in what is called “peaceful confrontation.”¹⁵ In other words, the Brazilian respondents establish, in *Getting Respect*, that it has been tradition in Brazil to avoid the conversation on race and replace that conversation with “class and race mixture narratives.”¹⁶ Federal University of Ceara's Department of Social Science Sociologist Geisa Mattos, whose “research focuses on movements against racism and police brutality in Brazil and their connections with international activist networks across the America,”¹⁷ notes that “conversations sparked by BLM in the United States are contributing to an increasing awareness of racism in Brazil. Solidarity manifested in meetings between Black Brazilians and African Americans is helping that awareness grow deeper.”¹⁸

Echoing the sentiments of many scholars who make the argument that any such thought that Brazilians have not been fighting for their racially marginalized in advance of the recent Black Lives Matter Global Movement would be both “ahistorical” and “imperialistic,”¹⁹ associate professor of government and African and African diaspora studies at the University of Texas at Austin, Juliet Hooker, states that “it is especially important to emphasize the reciprocal relationship between Black protest movements in different locales within the U.S. and Latin America. We must challenge the long-standing tendency in scholarship on race in the Americas to assume that Black

political mobilization in Latin America has imitated Black politics in the U.S.”²⁰ In other words, in Brazil, there is a correlative relationship with regards to movements and protests in the United States and in Brazil. Co-founding member of the Combahee River Collective, Demita Frazier, in her response to Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor’s question of “what would freedom, liberation, look like to you?” states, “if we’re talking simply about where we live, right here in this insanity – and I think about this in terms of the whole hemisphere, because it’s so interconnected...there is so much to be learned from the Brazilians and from the Afro-Brazilian experience.”²¹ In line with Ms. Hooker and Ms. Frazier, discussing Brazilians reaction to BLM, founding director of Brazil’s first online media for the black community, Site Mundo Negro, Silvia Nascimento importantly noted that “it’s not about copying Americans, but rather about observing your battles and successes, taking note of what works, and adapting it to our reality in Brazil.”²²

Written in bold on the Vidas Negras Importam official website is “Não permita que o racismo deixe a juventude negra para trás” (Do not let racism leave black youth behind). A powerful statement followed by staggering statistics about the cost of racism in Brazil. Vidas Negras notes that “in Brazil, seven out of ten people murdered are black” and that “in the 15-29 age group, five lives are lost to violence every two hours.” Further stated that if the issues of racism are not addressed, “there will be 43,000 Brazilians between the ages of 12 and 18 dead from 2015 to 2021, three times more black than white.” For this reason, Vida Negras was created. Their campaign states that,

The initiative seeks to expand the visibility of the problem of violence against black youth in the country, together with society, public managers, the justice system, the private sector and social movements. The objective is to draw attention to and sensitize the impacts of racism on the restriction of the citizenship of black people, influencing strategic actors in

the production and support of actions to combat discrimination and violence.

Further, the Vidas Negras Importam website states that the “lethality of black people is increasing and this requires policies focused on overcoming racial inequalities” and to avoid these deaths “it is necessary for the State and society to commit themselves to an end to racism - a key element in defining the profile of victims of violence.” Vidas Negras Importam has developed as “an invitation to Brazilians and Brazilians to enter the debate and promote and support actions against racial violence.”²³

Speaking with veteran activist and Brasil Solidarity Network co-founder, Colin Miller, (referred to by the Cetilá Itas, founder of Vidas Negras Importam for language barrier reasons) affirmed that Brazilians are aware, inspired, and have even been impacted by BLM. Miller recalled his close comrade Cetilá Itas, founder of Vidas Negras Importam in Brazil, of whom reached out to him via social media. Stating that he is an unofficial member of Vidas Negras Importam founded in 2016, he confirmed that Itas, who is from Salvador, was directly inspired by BLM as a black woman who experiences the effects of a system of white supremacy in Salvador. According to their Facebook page, which specifically states that they were inspired by the American BLM, Vidas Negras Importam in their successful organization of fellow Brazilian activists, have hosted several well attended events whose goals are to be “intervention proposal[s]” that call for “reflection on black lives and their importance” between 2015 and 2018.²⁴ Declaring Vidas Negras Importam’s grassroots operations and expressing his concern with “cooptation of the movement by political forces that benefit from people becoming martyrs,” he asserts that the organization is adamant about not supporting any political parties. Concerned with politicians using the Vidas Negras Importam name as propaganda, Miller expressed his concern that they would not provide protection for Itas, who has been forced to relocate on several occasions due to threats. Having

been involved in the many exchanges between BLM and Vidas Negras Importam, Miller contends that the movement has expressed solidarity with Vidas Negras Importam on various occasions with organizations.²⁵

Feeling impacted by the murder of Oscar Grant, the acquittal of George Zimmerman, and many of the unsolicited deaths that followed, Miller felt the “buildup of rage...and [was] inspired by [the] movements and actions that were taking place” as a response to it all. Helping him to reclaim his own black identity, pointing out that he would be considered “white” in Brazil because of his complexion, he was eager to use his voice to support the leadership of those who are most targeted or impacted by any black liberation movements. Expressing how immeasurable the impact of BLM is, Miller praised the organization and the organization’s founding members for being both black and queer – proof that solidarity is necessary because the discourse must be inclusive of all oppressions. For Miller, BLM “was responsible for breaking the mold of respectability politics [and] bringing back the importance of direct action.” In his opinion, the movement continues to “strike a nerve” in communities that are most impacted and “traumatized” by the roles that racism and violence by the state and white supremacy plays. Contending that the movement itself, inspired “hope, dignity, and self-respect,” Miller highlighted that it made conscious the responsibility that people have in standing with each other in the face of oppression and also gave them an “outlet” to display this solidarity. Considering the backlash and narrative of the opposition, insisting that “Blue Lives Matter” or “All Lives Matter,” he declares that such opposition is proof of BLM’s impact.²⁶

Speaking also with Trinity College administrator, Pastor, and Bishop, John L. Selders, Jr. he expressed that he has been a social justice activist for his entire adult career. An internationalist in his own right, Selders was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri and has never shied away from

an opportunity to fight for social justice. As a veteran activist he was personally affected by the protests in Ferguson and recalled that he didn't think twice to make himself available to be a part of those very protests. For Selders, it was where he needed to be. Connecting to the outcries of the movement because "it got personal" so much so that his close family and friends received the famous tear gas advice from the Palestinians, John L. Selders, Jr. appreciated the "passion" and "narrative" that the movement brought to the table. He was intrigued by the declaration that "black lives matter" because it was fresh and hard to ignore – in fact becoming a challenge to society to prove its correctness. Further, Selders was captivated with the movements ability to foster collaborations between the youth and "the elders." He also expressed his jubilation with how decentralized the movement was – sending a clear message that it would be difficult to destroy the movement given that a designated leader could not be compromised. Expressing how BLM "fits in[to the] tradition of [black] resistance," Selders noted that although the movement benefited from technological advances, it's local and international "connection was intentional." Selders felt the power of the movement during his time in Ferguson, enough so that he decided to create his own chapter of a North Carolina joint initiative between activists and communities of faith called Moral Mondays CT – whose goal is to connect to the larger BLM by connecting the "people of faith and [the] conscious."²⁷

In his organizing against these same oppressive forces, he received a call from the Brazil Police Watch organizers requesting they travel to Brazil with fellow Movement for Black Lives members to help Brazilian activists in the furtherance of their local activist work.²⁸ After the fatal shooting of her nephew Joseph "Joe" Martin by an off-duty police officer in Brazil in 2007, Liz Martin founded Brazil Police Watch in 2011²⁹ to bring international attention to the police violence taking place in Brazil.³⁰ It was Brazil Police Watch that drew Selders to Brazil as a BLM activist

and where he witnessed the power of intersectionality as the police officer responsible for Joseph Martin's death was brought to trial – an outcome that is rare in Brazil. Thrilled that “delegates [from the U.S.] were able to generate some buzz by flying to the city and standing with them,” during the 2016 Rio Olympics, specifically on July 23, a march was successfully organized in central Rio where about Brazil Police Watch delegates from Boston and nearly “200 Brazilians” chanted with “fists raised and pictures of police brutality victims” before they held a vigil for the “seven homeless teens and a 20- year-old man slaughtered by police who opened fire on approximately 60 kids sleeping at the [Candelaria cathedral]...in 1993.”³¹

While in Brazil, Selders witnessed that Brazilians not only represented the African in body, but in spirit, highlighting that at his time of his arrival a celebration titled “Julho Negro” or “Black July” was taking place in the midst of what he describes as Brazil's “cultural Renaissance.” While he notes that there is a culture of denial of race in Brazil, he attested to the encouragement their visit curated among Brazilian locals, especially during this time of Black awareness. Selders highlighted that Afro-Brazilians are veteran social justice activists, but in his opinion the Brazilians needed the powerful influence of, and the subsequent connections to, BLM. Selders testifies to feeling a sense of empowerment by the intersectionality taking place, when asked by the Brazil Police Watch organizers, who having been organizing broadly themselves, if BLM would assist in continuing the connection and conversation. Excited about the possibility of a future trip back to Brazil in 2019, he expressed the importance of these “pockets of resistance” where international and national conversations are taking place for people of African descent.³²

When asked about direct influences on Brazilians by BLM, Selders spoke about the Favela Lives Matter campaign – favelas being the neighborhoods and communities where darker-skinned and poor disenfranchised Brazilians live with an overwhelming amount of police presence and

police violence akin to American “ghettos.”³³ The Favela Lives Matter campaign, which has been known for “turning up popular pressure on the government over its failure to deliver security to citizens,” was launched by Thainã de Medeiros who “lives in the Alemão group of favelas” and is also a part of a “citizen journalism collective called Papo Reto, or “straight talk,” which denounces security failures in Alemão with the help of smartphones and video streaming.”³⁴ Selders noted that the Favela Lives Matter campaign was founded as a direct result of interaction between activists in Brazil and from Black Lives Matter. For him this was a direct connection to and proof of the Black Lives Matter influence happening simultaneously with veteran Brazilian activists’ engagement with their ongoing social justice agendas.³⁵

As a Professor of Sociology at the Federal University of Ceará in Brazil, Geísa Mattos’ post-doctoral research, developed at the PhD Program in Sociology, City University of New York between 2015 and 2016 “was about movements against racism and police brutality in Brazil and their connections with the activism in the United States.”³⁶ Her primary research is currently about inequality in cities, where she was interested in “stigmatization of neighborhoods.” While in the United States, she witnessed the impact of the fatal shooting of Michael Brown and choking death of Eric Garner seeing the connections with Brazil. On her return to Brazil, she decided to focus her study on the connections between anti-racist movements in America and Brazil.³⁷

Speaking with Mattos, she recalled that while in New York, during the height of protests against police violence between 2015 and 2016, as a priority she went to many of the platforms where she spoke directly with black activists. While speaking with these activists she highlighted that, although they were well versed in the injustices taking place in Brazil, there was a lack of connection between the BLM organization and Brazilian activists and organizations. In Mattos opinion, even with BLM activists talking in “transnational terms in their narratives,” there

continues to be “a lack of connections between the organization and Afro-Brazilian activists and a lack of social media representation of main cases of police violence taking place in Brazil.” In her opinion, BLM was using the general information about Brazil to “strengthen their own narratives, but not for really building solidarity.” On the other hand, according to Mattos, as Brazilians became more aware of their racial identity, they were able to “connect with the images” coming out of BLM activism by relating it to the “police violence and homicides in Brazil.” Having had the opportunity to listen to the debates involving Rio de Janeiro’s activist Raul Santiago and São Paulo’s activist Débora Silva, who were invited by Amnesty International to the U.S. to “denounce the situation of black genocide in Brazil,” she recalls that the attendance of BLM activists and other non-governmental organizations “allowed all in attendance to make important connections between the fights in both countries.” According to Mattos, while “these connections eventually led to the 2016 Brazil Police Watch cooperative,” it was “unable to reach the mainstream media in North America, limiting its scope to the social media accounts of BLM activists.”³⁸

Mattos would soon find out that the ideology of BLM was more complex. For her, between 2014 to 2017 she witnessed the movement having many influential images in the media in Brazil and other parts of the world, allowing people all over the world to connect with and be proud of Afrocentrism. During the times of the fatal shootings of Michael Brown and the New York Police Department choking death of Eric Garner, Mattos recalled that in Brazil members of the favela communities in Brazil were trying to call attention to the fact that “the majority of people killed by police in Brazil are also black.” Noting that before 2014 “some organizations and activists in Brazil were trying to call attention to the racial issue in the police brutality in Brazil,” she remembered taking part in a demonstration of about 20 to 30 people in her city. Discussing the

Vidas Negras Importam and the React of Die movements, she noted that these movements are trying to call attention to black Brazilian deaths. Before these movements began, in her opinion, black movements in Brazil were restricted to middle class citizens. Now, according to Mattos there is a “growing awareness of racism in police approaches...this coming from the favelas.” Now the awareness of racism is being vocalized by young favela leaders, “who benefited from affirmative action policies of the ‘most important Universities in Brazil’ which began at the height of the 21st century.”³⁹

While black Brazilians were inspired by BLM, Mattos believes that Brazil’s affirmative action programs helped to usher in a tradition whereby college graduates from the favelas would return to the favelas to discuss racism with “much more eloquence” and to question the lack of black men and women within academia in Brazil. However, she believes that with the organization becoming greater than they ever imagined and connecting with people globally, #BlackLivesMatter was able to “spread through social media” amongst the “left’s activists and organizations from Brazil.” An example would be the use of the hashtag in Brazil to “connect similar cases in Brazil” using #BlackLivesMatter or by Portuguese translations #vidasnegrasimportam or #vidasnasfavelasimportam. With struggles all over the world using the hashtag for their own advocacy, the hashtag developed into a vital part of the organization itself by creating positivity and awareness.⁴⁰

On whether race is an important factor in “intersectionality of movements,” Selders takes the hard stance that race is indeed instrumental regarding intersectionality and argues that “white supremacy” aims to destroy any connections amongst the oppressed because of how important it is. He maintains that the power of white supremacy lies in its ability to keep us separated and in a permanent “underclass,” believing that we are “different.” He further adds that while a person can

see the global effects of white supremacy's systems of oppression, next to race, money is a considerable factor that remains "tied to colonial powers." Witnessing a country rich with African history – remnants of the Atlantic slave trade – Selders immediately saw the connection between the African American and Afro-Brazilian plight in the face of white supremacy. For him, similar to that of the United States "evil economics and bad biology created...sick sociology using terrible theology," which helped foster Brazil's current "racial democracy."⁴¹ In his discussion on witnessing the racial democracy of Brazil, and its ability to propagandize on the idea that Brazil is a happy melting pot, Miller is in agreement that there is currently, like John Selders of Brazil Police Watch has stated, a cultural renaissance, he feels that race is essential in spite of it being "biological fiction" and "social reality."⁴²

Declaring that the "racial identity, particularly amongst the favela youth, is becoming widespread...and it's influencing the movements approach to police violence," Mattos believes this influence is changing the approach from a 'human rights general perspective' to a race-based approach." With BLM activists, like Selders, partaking in the Brazil Police Watch, she noted that BLM members were made aware that it is not only about race in Brazil, but also an issue of class. With the discourse on slavery and police violence increasing in Brazil, Mattos believes that mass incarceration, like in America as noted by Michelle Alexander, is a problem that effects black people all over the world and especially in Brazil, labeling it "racial extermination." Mattos notes that now in Brazil there is an intersectionality of movements on many bases – noting that it is the first time that many Brazilians are identifying themselves as black. Additionally, in her studies of the attack against Marielle Franco, who as noted before, was a prevalent Brazilian feminist and activist who was assassinated as a result of her outspoken and powerful cry for justice for black Brazilians, Mattos is studying how this attack is related to "white supremacy," and why "white

supremacy” is so aggressive towards black women. From the point-of-view of a professor, she feels that we can now think about women in terms of “intersectionality and specificity” of the fight of black women. Describing Marielle Franco’s death as having had “great impact” on transnational black activism, Mattos has taken note of the growing black feminism in Brazil – in part due to a “world digitally connected” – even highlighting the historical election of black women from the favelas as state deputies or according to her the “seeds of Marielle Franco.”⁴³

With intersectionality being of the utmost importance in the opinion of Selders and Miller, as a mixed-race person, Miller feels he is an embodiment of intersectionality. Believing that “if any of us are to get free, we all have to get free together,” Miller explains that in his work he strives to be as intersectional as possible and argues that organizers aren’t “doing their job” if they only address one struggle at a time. Discussing his own Brasil Solidarity Network, Miller notes that while only a 2019 formation, successfully organizing and hosting a “Rally in Honor of Marielle Franco” on March 14, 2019,⁴⁴ it is a project of the Idle No More, FSA movement – “one of the largest Indigenous mass movements in Canadian history” founded in 2012 by three aboriginal women to “honour Indigenous sovereignty, and to protect the land and water”⁴⁵ – that asserts the importance of intersectionality with Indigenous sovereignty, black sovereignty and liberation. Working on uplifting the independent voices of black and Indigenous Brazilians with regard to land rights and climate change destruction of the Amazon, he notes that it was partially inspired by the Free Nelson Mandela movement to end apartheid in South Africa (an inspiration that aligns with Wandile Kasibe’s take on intersectionality) – comparing such apartheid with post-slavery Brazil. Stressing that the Brasil Solidarity Network is non-political and inspired by BLM in that regard, Miller highlights the organizations goal of building relationships through intersectionality, and not political platforms, by using “grassroots to grassroots solidarity.”⁴⁶

For Mattos, also important in “intersectionality of movements,” is academia, where in Brazil the pressure from social movements to change the discourse to the “racial identity of the victims from the police” is underway. Having described the return of college graduates to their favela communities to encourage and educate fellow community members, Mattos expressed how important it was that this level of solidarity taking place between the youth and college graduates.⁴⁷ Declaring the importance of intersectionality existing within local communities, Miller states that he is committed to trying to “connect the [Black Lives Matter] movement more to itself,” believing that as long as we do our work in “silos” we will never truly be connected. While he acknowledges that each struggle has its own “front line,” he believes that intersectionality is a way for different struggles to “support each other in tangible ways,” finding a connecting point to “really build power in a transformative way.”⁴⁸ Selders, akin to Dr. King, believes that all our struggles, though unique, are “an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.” When asked about being labeled an “outside agitator” in joining various social movements, he proclaimed that he, like Dr. King, has a duty to participate in movements for social change. Looking to Dr. King for guidance in this context, he remembers Dr. King’s words about injustice – “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Selders underscored that we must keep in mind that the systems of oppression will, without doubt, stay tied together, so it is the job of the oppressed to do the same. For him, any time there is inequality faced by anyone there is some “relatability,” where showing up for one another becomes necessary.⁴⁹

An internationalist himself, Selders maintains that the Civil Rights Movement was, and still is, an inspiration globally, highlighting that even the movement itself made its way across the borders. With both the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Live Matter Movement in sight, he strongly believes that the African American struggle is a source of inspiration for many local and

international movements.⁵⁰ Miller asserts that the Black power movements, as noted by African activists Wandile Kasibe and Rachael Mwikali, are indeed inspirational and iconic, and subsequently made them resonate with people around the world. He believes people are still inspired by that era – an era that gave a spirit of rebellion, resistance, and solidarity – with people unsure about who the “young new leaders [of BLM] are.” This, Miller believes, like Selders, is an advantage because there lacks a centralized leader to be compromised.⁵¹ For Mattos, while the African American struggle is a source of inspiration, Brazilians draw more inspiration from processes such as affirmative action which according to her are instrumental in “awareness of racial identity.”⁵² In Miller’s opinion, “all organizing is first and foremost relational,” so that era continues to inspire people around the world and certainly inspires black Brazilians. Believing that “we need to inspire each other and come together” and be leaders in our own communities, he testifies that Marielle Franco’s story needs to be told in the same capacity. Further, discussing BLM’s use of the media, Miller noted that while many in America are unaware of the death of Marielle Franco in the United States, Brazilians are often unaware of happenings in the United States on account of their news media being “very strongly opposed to notions of rebellion” reaching the majority black mass population, because the U.S. media is not as controlled.⁵³ Mattos declares that in the United States the media has helped to expand BLM’s influence by putting into circulation the images of the police violence against African Americans⁵⁴ and Miller believes that it’s a “challenge” in Brazil for Brazilians to have impactful news reach them – such as the protests in Ferguson.

While colorism and bearded racism has aided in the ongoing police and alleged state sanctioned violence, Brazil’s “cultural renaissance” has promised to correct the ongoing atrocities through its ongoing activism. While BLM cannot claim that they have started Brazil’s “cultural

renaissance” they are championed for having aided in the continuation of this activism by providing both inspiration, encouragement, and sometimes guidance to Brazilian activists. An increase in connection could help BLM and Brazilian activists to clearly highlight the similarities between, and solutions to combat, the violence on black Brazilians and Americans.

Chapter 3: Winkie Country: Asia - India

Our healing brings us into new kinds of relationships with one another.¹

Healing Justice Reason #3

Next stop towards international intersectionality of movements on the “social justice yellow brick road” is Winkie Country which is a place where we find “very hardworking people.”² This country is India. Discussing first the deep connections made by scholars between African Americans and India’s bottom caste members – the Dalits, we then describe the current campaigns created to advocate on behalf of the Dalits. Attorney Mehmood Pracha, President of the South Asian Minorities Lawyers Association, has created a campaign by the title “Dalit Minority Tribal Lives Matter,” designed out of inspiration by and to model the approaches of BLM. Co-editor of *The Radical in Ambedkar: Critical Reflections*, Suraj Yengde, inspired by the intersectional thinking of India Constitution pioneer Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, was inspired by the “radical” BLM enough so that he encouraged, and still encourages, a connection between the movement and the Dalits. In India, even without a formal connection, the inspiration by BLM is genuine.

Considered one of the most powerful advocates for India’s Dalit caste,³ instrumental in the construction of the Indian Constitution, and born in what is now Central Asia’s Madhya Pradesh, brandishing a Mahar “Untouchables status” himself,⁴ Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, like Martin Luther King, Jr., used his education to propel himself forward in the fight for those who have been historically marginalized.⁵ Suraj Yengde and Anand Teltumbde’s *The Radical in Ambedkar: Critical Reflections*, discusses the theories of Ambedkar, “chief architect and...Chairman of the Draft Committee of the Constitution of Republic of India, and pays considerable attention to Dalit oppression and the Dalit liberation movement’s connection to other movements to end oppression.⁶ In the essays throughout *The Radical in Ambedkar* there is a clear demonstration of the connections between the Dalit Movement against the current Indian class and caste systems, and the African

American fight for equality and freedom in America.

Thought to be divine, the Indian Varna System includes five classes, starting from the Brahmin, or member of the highest class,⁷ at the very top and ending with the Untouchables at the very bottom.⁸ Today, the Untouchables, officially the “Scheduled Castes” (SC),⁹ call themselves the Dalit. Etymologically defined as “depressed or broken people,” according to Molesworth’s Marathi-English dictionary, the term ‘Dalit’ generally means “‘ground’, ‘broken’ or ‘reduced to pieces’.”¹⁰ In the newspaper *Bahishkrit Bharat*, or *Untouchable India*,¹¹ Ambedkar defines the term ‘Dalit’ as “an experience and condition of life that was characterized by the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Untouchables by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the caste Hindu Brahminical order.”¹² When defining themselves, the Dalit Mahasaba (“a people's organisation that spearheaded the Dalit movement”) include words such as “exploited” and “discriminated” as well, while Gandhi himself referred to them as “‘Harijan’...[or]...‘Children of God’,” a term that Ambedkar objected to due to its “derogatory and insulting” implications.¹³ Ambedkar did not see the Dalit as “fatherless people,” as Gandhi’s term implies,¹⁴ but rather he saw them as great people, having the potential, once united, to create an “Indian democracy” that would terminate “poverty...squalor, ignorance, [and] inequality.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, the infighting amongst the Dalit would prove problematic for the Dalit movement.¹⁶

As a result of the Dandora movement, which ultimately fought for the “subcategorization”¹⁷ within the SC category, today there is division amongst the “heterogenous [SC] castes”¹⁸ on the basis of economic class and caste. Teltumbde, in *The Radical Ambedkar*, suggests a “bisociative revolution” in which the “socioeconomic class struggle and the Dalit liberation struggle – are happening...simultaneously with generally the same strategical importance.”¹⁹ Teltumbde makes the argument that these relationships should be “investigated”²⁰

to find similarities and “interlocking components.”²¹ To do this, Teltumbde suggests that the Dalits find “similarly independent yet interlocking paths to liberation,”²² of which they have done with African American struggles.

While the Dalits have historically familiarized themselves with African American struggles²³ – including the Black Panthers inspired Varna System opposition of the Dalit Panthers and Ambedkar reaching out to W.E.B. DuBois requesting a copy of DuBois’ petition to the UN “accusing the US of human rights violations” of African Americans²⁴ – Ambedkar felt that the one thing that he failed to do was unify the Dalit movement with “other civil and political rights movements the world over.”²⁵ Today, often being compared to the African American struggle for equality, the Dalit movement believes that their success depends on that of the African American struggle.²⁶ In fact, Justin Leroy in his *Journal of Asian American Studies* article “Insurgency and Asian American Studies in the Time of Black Lives Matter,” echoes this thought noting that the “civil rights protections” afforded to Asian Americans are “in large part due to black-led freedom struggles.”²⁷ The Dalits agree and believe that once African Americans obtain equality, there will be hope for many other groups to “draw inspiration and moral and legal legitimacy within their own country.”²⁸ Today, Dalit movement organizers and Dalit women activist, have coordinated with Black Lives Matter “for both support and for strategies and [on what] policies they should pursue.”²⁹ Organizations such as, Project Mukti, All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch (AIDMAM), and South Asian Minorities Lawyers Association’s (SAMLA) are manifestations of this coordination, with Project Mukti and AIDMAM actively reaching out to, and holding forums with, BLM.

Deputy editor of the Indian web publication The Wire, Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar, in his article “Black Lives Matter Influences a Similar Campaign for Dalits, Minorities and Tribals in

India,” discusses the collaboration amongst attorneys and activists in countering the vigilante violence against the “socially backward, poor and marginalized sections” in India.³⁰ Bhatnagar discusses The South Asian Minorities Lawyers Association’s (SAMLA) Dalit, Minority, Tribal, Lives Matter as being an organization set up to combat such violence, specifically an organization composed of “legal practitioners and other individuals interested in espousing the cause of weaker sections of society through legal and constitutional means.”³¹ SAMLA President and senior advocate, Attorney Mehmood Pracha, noted that the Dalit, Minority, Tribal, Lives Matter campaign, launched as a comparable version of the “torch” bearing BLM, would provide a group of lawyers that would “aggressively” fight for the marginalized (Dalits, Minority, and Tribal groups³²) who have been traditionally ignored when trying to voice their frustration with vigilante violence against their communities.³³

Speaking with Attorney Mehmood Pracha, the son of a freedom fighter, he explains that he began his law career in India as an international attorney for outer space law³⁴ before being elected in 2017 as president of the South Asian Minorities Lawyers Association (SAMLA), a collection of attorneys from the minority communities of their respective South Asian countries [India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka³⁵] whose priority is to represent those in their communities who have been traditionally oppressed and discriminated against. After having taken a high-profile case representing a man alleged to be a terrorist, Pracha now as president of SAMLA, frustrated with the lack of true justice being established for minorities (such as Muslims, Christians, Dalits, and Indigenous people) and with caste constructed “roadblocks” against the Dalits, decided to expand the meaning of the term “minority” to include the Dalits. His modus operandi for SAMLA being to use a joined force of underrepresented groups to maximize the strength of each’s impact in fighting their individual

struggles in a “short span of time.” As a result, the creation of the Dalit Minority Tribal Lives Matter campaign was launched via an Interactive Session at the India Law Institute in New Delhi on July 4, 2017,³⁶ in which Pracha mentions on several platforms, was inspired by BLM in America.³⁷

Describing the first time he found out about BLM in 2015, Pracha recalled seeing the various demonstrations in America and likening them to what was taking place in India at the time. He recalled being inspired by the “fearless” way the BLM representatives and protestors articulated themselves and the way in which they remained unintimidated by the state and police forces. He noted that this fearlessness was key in ensuring the success of a movement and in his opinion, BLM was doing so boldly.³⁸ Speaking with co-editor of *The Radical in Ambedkar: Critical Reflections*, Suraj Yengde, born in India, a post-doctoral fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School, and India’s first Dalit Ph.D. holder from an African university in the nation’s history, was attracted to BLM because it was “radical” in the leadership that is “traditionally fashioned” – that of an “aggressive males.” Noting that he has opposition also with this depiction of the “aggressive” black male, he highlights two different portrayals of black activists – those with a calm temperament like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and those with a turbulent temperament like Malcolm X – that are always being pit against each other when they can instead be complimentary. Then BLM emerges and is led by “fiery young women folks, [who are] queer.” What he liked, but wondered how much he would truly appreciate, about BLM was that they don’t have a central leadership, which in his opinion can often “kill a movement” due to traditional power struggles. Having participated in traditional organizations he was keen in noticing that BLM doesn’t have traditional leadership and that each chapter organizes independently. Asked to discuss the most important BLM concept to the Dalits, Yengde believes that the whole notion of BLM is very

powerful being on “its face.” He believes that the Dalits can use the same and “communicate that this life matters” and that those three words can “actually amplify many undertones.” He is attracted to how BLM has “defined its radical objectives.”³⁹

Mehmood, agreeing with Yengde, finding BLM different from their Civil Rights Era “brothers and sisters,” Pracha believes that BLM is no longer a “one sided operation” but is instead an actual “battle” for rights. For Pracha, the approach of BLM, compared to that of the civil rights era, is “more practical and more effective now than ever.” In his opinion, the movement is “fighting [and] seeing directly” at the same level as the oppressors. Pracha was further inspired when he noted that BLM members were being labeled as terrorist by the state in order to allow them to use whatever tactics necessary to force control over the movement. For him, this was akin to the use of the term “terrorist” in India which he views the state use of it as being an excuse to commit atrocities and to deny the rights of the oppressed.⁴⁰ While he was inspired by BLM in creating the Dalit Minority Tribal Lives Matter movement to “assert the rights of the oppressed communities in India,”⁴¹ today, Pracha feels that the movement is not yet where it should be and continues to advocate for it to press forward. He believes that if they had an unbiased media outlet, like that of BLM which he argues, like Miller and Kasibe, has allowed the rapid and noteworthy expansion of the movement, then the Dalit Minority Tribal Lives Matter movement would have similar, and in his opinion maybe even more rapid, success in gaining supporters throughout India and internationally. He states that in America, BLM has a “better shade of journalism” and in India he asserts that the media is an “absolute blackout.” When asked if language may also be a barrier, Pracha contends that although there are multiple languages throughout India, language is not a barrier, and in fact, similar to Kasibe, Pracha believes that oppression is the one language that every oppressed person speaks and understands.⁴²

Whereas Mehmood did not mention of any formal contact with BLM, Yengde on the other hand, believing that BLM developed as a response to the atrocities against black people, has expressed interest in connecting with BLM because he is interested in the black freedom struggle and understanding “how it positions itself in articulating as well as engaging” with the “civic...structural civil society...[and]...the structural institutions.” Yengde explained that he has reached out to the Boston chapter on of BLM on several occasions to, highlighting that he believes they can learn from the Dalit movement and the Dalit movement can learn from them as well, develop a conversation on connecting, organizing, and standing together. His personal interests are in how the connections will be made between black people and the Dalits in India and how the discussion will be framed.⁴³

Further, when asked to discuss the most important BLM concept to the Dalits, Yengde believes that the whole notion of BLM is very powerful being on “its face.” He believes that the Dalits can use the same and “communicate that this life matters” and that those three words can “actually amplify many undertones.” Yengde is attracted to how BLM has “defined its radical objectives.” On the other hand, as a Dalit and a transnationalist activist he believes that it is important to know that BLM is not the only space for a movement and he encourages connections with other black and oppressed people’s movements. As previously mentioned, he has reached out to BLM Boston several times so that he can develop a conversation on connecting, organizing, and standing together. Though he is not able to comment on what international connections have helped to transform BLM, Yengde suggested that he will continue to reach out to the founders of BLM so that he can take them to India and give them an actual demonstration of why connecting is important for each struggle.⁴⁴

Similarly, Pracha believes that there is “absolute parity” between the African American

struggle and the struggle of the Dalits and oppressed minority groups in India. He further notes that like African Americans, the oppressed in India are discouraged by a legal and criminal justice system that does not represent them and instead seeks to portray a just system while not so covertly infringing on the rights of the oppressed. He also notes that in both regions there is a practice of being satisfied with just a little progress. Using the first African American former U.S. president and the three former Muslim Indian Presidents as examples, Pracha argues that each respective movement must not be pacified by what he calls “eyewash” – a temporary fix of sorts. Instead, Pracha encourages all movements to not only “want presidents” but to want to be equal citizens able to live and to not be consumed with the oppressors attempt to stagnate the growth of the movements with these eyewashes.⁴⁵

Pracha believes that Ambedkar, being the pioneer of the Dalit movement, would be the “happiest” with BLM and, like Yengde declares, would encourage the continued intersectionality. Pracha, in full agreeance with Angela Davis’ claim on “intersectionality of movements,” declares that intersectionality is of the “highest” importance in ensuring that individual struggles are strengthened. Discussing the unlikelihood of oppressors being able to defeat smaller movements, if these smaller movement are interconnected locally and internationally, Pracha, like John Selders of Brazil Police Watch, believes that it is important for the oppressed to form alliances internationally and locally just as the oppressors do. In discussing the importance of local connections as well, Pracha noted that much more needs to be done in practice for the Dalit women struggle and describing the slim chance that many oppressed groups have against their oppressors, he declares that once joined together, political strength will increase. He continues to stress that combining forces and “joining hands” internationally are important elements in dissuading the divisive tactics of the respective oppressions.⁴⁶

On the other hand, Yengde is interested in creating a collegial community of “the oppressed of the oppressed” people where they don’t come with “the idea of being oppressed but with the idea of taking charge of their own life.” He wants to “overrule” the victim mentality and transform it into a “ruling class” but “not in the sense of exploitative power” but for a “democratic socialist foundation.” He highlights that “intersectionality of movements” is a “very pertinent intervention” and praised Angela Davis’ internationalism as also being very important to “contemporary struggles.” Yengde noted that Angela Davis is a “legend” who visited India and connected with his elders of the Dalit Panthers era.⁴⁷

Discussing his “Fourth World Project” Yengde notes that while localized issues are different, “the way the we [all] receive oppression...is very fundamental.” Yengde’s “Fourth World” Project highlights the “important need to identify...underprivileged groups [or “oppressed of the oppressed”] and establish international solidarity networks.” Yengde further states that because of isolation many of these oppressed people are unable to communicate and the hegemon in their society is successful in keeping them oppressed. He makes the argument that the “Fourth World” contradicts the idea of nation itself and notes that it is important to pay attention to both “social and class dynamics, or else there will be continuous oppression [where] people without power” remain this way. Similar to Pracha, Yengde states that if these people were to make connections, e.g. with African-Americans or poor Africans, “the peasants and indigenous peoples of Latin America, Australia” they will be able to “share views” and recognize their similarities. It is for this reason, Yengde has endeavored for connections with BLM to expand the dialogue. Like Pracha, Yengde believes the media was, and still is, instrumental in BLM expanding their dialogue. For Yengde, it has made police brutality a dialogue and amplified the voice of the “new under caste” – African Americans. Yengde notes that BLM and Dalit Tribal Lives Matter movement are

evidently interacting at the local level but notes that “what black lives matter has is media attention and they can use it very effectively,” because this is how the “world looks at them.”⁴⁸

Yengde further notes that there should be a “struggle on both fronts” and that one of the important approaches that BLM carries out is to educate the world about white supremacy. Yengde notes that while race is still a very new concept, “150 years ago it would have been a joke.” He adds that the “American race concept is very different” from the rest of the world – it being mainly about “black and white” – while the rest of the world sees race differently, like in Brazil. He states that “one of the reasons that black calls get echoed in the world is because it is in the belly of the beast.” That beast being America. He declares that this is both good and bad – bad in that it doesn’t demonstrate “other perspectives that are happening in the world.” Discussing the transnationalism of Civil Rights Era icons, he mentions Martin Luther King Jr. traveling to India, Malcolm X visiting Africa, W.E.B. Du Bois and Frederick Douglass and connections with the Irish brothers and various colonial empires. Yengde stressed the importance of making these connections and to revisit the concept of blackness. He suggests a look at “how race forms in [the] American scenario,” compared to the Dalits where race in India is “not necessarily based out of the historical markers of injustices as casteism.” He further notes that acknowledgment of our unique experiences, i.e. perspectives on race, is important, but we need to explore “creating...new formulations that will...remove us out of our localized formations and give us an identity that is forcibly global, universal, and...acceptable.”⁴⁹

Clear historical parallels are drawn between the African American struggle and the Indian Dalit struggle. While it is also important for the Dalits to learn from Ambedkar to be intersectional on many fronts, the inspiration that BLM has given the Dalits is undeniable. Room for further intersectionality between the two movements has yet to reach capacity, but with a foundation laid

by both the Dalits and BLM, intersectionality is conceivable.

Chapter 4: Quadling Country: Australia

Healing, culture and spirit have always sustained us and informed our struggles for liberation.¹

Healing Justice Reason #7

Our next destination, towards international intersectionality of movements on the “social justice yellow brick road,” is Quadling Country, which is said to be “rich, pleasant and lovely, [and] inhabited by kind and friendly people.”² For this country we stop in Australia. Beginning by discussing the history of the “Blak,” or Aboriginal, people in Australia, we see how colonialism and slavery helped to shape the current racism in Australia that has led to strong activism on behalf of the First Nations People of Australia. Speaking with Emelda Davis, we get a first-hand account of the history of the advocacy for Australian South Sea Islanders and how BLM has continued to encourage and inspire them in their ongoing fight for justice. With the Sydney Peace Prize to show for the depth of the movement’s inspiration, the testimonies of Australian writer and activist Bridget Harilaou and Australia’s Anticolonial Asian Alliance (AAA) media and public relations manager Kenji Khozoei, further prove the impact the movement has made in Australia.

The Australian South Sea Islanders – Port Jackson website states that 62,475 indenture “scheme” contracts were issued for Pacific Islanders to work as “labourers in Queensland [Labour Trade and sugar industry³] between 1863 and 1904,” the majority of which were “healthy adolescent and young adult males.”⁴ According to Lincoln Hayes’ article “The tangible link: Historical archaeology and the cultural heritage of the Australian South Sea Islanders,” these indentured labourers arrived to Australia from “the Pacific Islands of Vanuatu, New Caledonia and the Solomons (among others)” – some came willingly, others unwillingly through “kidnapping commonly referred to as ‘blackbirding.’”⁵ Recruited to do the undesirable work of the Europeans, the indentured labourers were often left to live in conditions that encouraged the spread of disease.⁶

In fact, before the “relative success of civil rights campaigning in Australia in the 1970s,” the indentured labourers, or Islanders, were “absent from written records for over 60 years.”⁷ After the civil rights campaign, “Islanders returned to the surface as an ethnic entity, forming political associations and lobbying both the Queensland Government and the Commonwealth Government for recognition.”⁸ Additionally, the Islanders “began to develop a new sense of identity, both through academic interest in their history and the renewal of kinship links across the Pacific with people from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. Developing ties with their ancestral homelands especially affected many Islanders and their sense of self.”⁹ Ultimately, the Islanders “achieved recognition as an official ethnic group in Australia” Government,¹⁰ in 1994 and 2000 from the Commonwealth and Queensland Government¹¹ respectively.

In the 21st Century, connections have been made between African-Americans and the Australian South Sea Islanders. In fact, many of the problems faced by African-Americans in the United States also plague the Islanders of Queensland, Australia. Mike Cole, in his book *Racism: A Critical Analysis*, notes that “poverty in Australia is related to ethnicity and racism.”¹² Further, Greg Sutherland, Pacific Island Vanuatu descendant, South Sea Islander and chair of the National South Sea Islander Working Group, states that the experience of the indentured labourer is similar to the experience of slaves in America¹³ and, in line with Michelle Alexander’s claim of African Americans being overrepresented in the mass incarceration population, highlights the same holds true for indigenous people.¹⁴ Further, the effects on the Aboriginal people of the “Stolen generations,” where “Aboriginal people [were] forcefully taken away (stolen) from their families between the 1890s and the 1970s, many of whom never saw their parents, siblings or relatives again, and many of whom were told they were orphans,”¹⁵ can also be likened to African-American communities torn apart by slavery, the War on Drugs and subsequent mass incarceration.

Alyawarre Aboriginal Pat Anderson importantly notes, in line with Ta-Nehisi Coates, “people – any people – cannot thrive if they are not connected,” a sentiment felt by many Aboriginal and African people who, having had their families torn apart, continue to search for family connections.¹⁶

Speaking with Emelda Davis, Chairwoman of the Australian South Sea Islanders-Port Jackson (ASSI-PJ) – Port Jackson being the colonial term for Sydney Harbour – she recalls the “legislated” “‘Indentured Labour’ scheme” by renowned entrepreneur Benjamin Boyd, where South Sea Islanders were first illegally trafficked to New South Wales (NSW) in 1847. The trade “reaped” the eighty islands of Vanuatu and Solomon’s of a large, mostly male, population.¹⁷ Laborers from Melanesia, or Torres Strait Islanders,¹⁸ “were coerced and kidnapped to work alongside First Nations People.” Today, these laborers advocate for the “rightful recognition and social justice issues that are affecting their marginalized communities,” and have been successful in their work, namely in being “voted the official representative voice [of all Australian South Sea Islanders] as the ASSI National Secretariat in 2012.”¹⁹

According to Davis, despite being in Australia for 172 years, Australian South Sea Islanders are still struggling to live. Australian writer and activist, Bridget Harilaou notes that Australia’s “blak” – the correct term for Indigenous people while people of African descent or other ethnic groups are called “black” – population has endured “massacres, land theft, biological warfare, induced alcoholism, cycles of poverty, drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, theft of children (called the Stolen Generations), over-incarceration and...police brutality.” Davis further argues that it is vital to speak about the “untold stories” of Australian South Sea Islanders to “give a sense of belonging” in Australia, where First Nations Peoples are ignored by a nation that champions multiculturalism. Davis emphasizes the importance in acknowledging Australian South

Sea Islanders history and their story of survival as part of the global narrative of slavery given that “Australia had a Slave trade.” Demonstrating what Pat Anderson and Ta-Nehisi Coates discuss essentially about “disembodiment,” she affirms that while Australian South Sea Islanders are still looking for their families they believe that an increase in discourse about this history will lead to hereditary connections.²⁰

Hereditary connections being key for Davis, she expressed that Australian South Sea Islanders are a part of BLM “family.” She recalled that it was the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin and subsequent protests that sparked the interests of the Australian South Sea Islanders.²¹ This interest was due to the parallelism with the Australian Black Deaths in Custody movement, where advocacy focuses on Aboriginal people, like David Dungay-Hill, Jr. and Cameron Doomadgee, who are statistically “23 times more likely to die in [police] custody”²² than non-Aboriginal people.²³ Bridget Harilaou, who recalled connecting to BLM after seeing images of Sandra Bland and Philando Castile, and Australia’s Anticolonial Asian Alliance (AAA) media and public relations manager, Kenji Khozoei, who recalled his feelings of shock and anger at the fatal shooting of Michael Brown and the choking death of Eric Garner, both believe that BLM is “deeply” connected to Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the issue of police violence.²⁴ With Harilaou calling BLM “radical,”²⁵ and Khozoei calling the movement “powerful, urgent, and necessary,”²⁶ it isn’t surprising that after having witnessed these events via social media and traditional news outlets, Davis affirmed that this was something ASSI-PJ felt compelled to speak on for the first time publicly. According to her, ASSI-PJ did so on the National Indigenous Television (NITV) news broadcast where they spoke out and said they are “committed to and will align with BLM” because of this ongoing history of violence.²⁷

Declaring that “there is something greater at work,” Davis attests that “this global [BLM]

movement is a great platform to connect with other people in the struggle.” In her opinion, the cry that black lives matter was, and still is, a “refreshing” idea where community groups, who traditionally work in their own “silos,” could connect on a global platform due to how inclusive the declaration was. In fact, in 2016, a BLM march was organized in Sydney and she remembers the crowd being diverse as a result of this inclusivity, allowing for capacity building and “cross-culture connections.” For Davis, the cry itself was much more inclusive than Civil Rights Era cries and as a result sparks debate. These debates allowing black people the opportunity to respond when asked why other lives aren’t included in the cry – Davis’ response being “until we have an equal footing, social justice, and respect, human rights for our people.” For the ASSI-PJ, Davis believes that all BLM principles are in line with her organization’s principles, reason being that all the movement’s principles are ultimately about “caring, sharing, loving, self-determination” and “not being apologetic for being black.” In her opinion, taking these everyday principles and making them into a policy helps to “strengthen [BLM] through networking and sharing through social media” – a platform Davis believes has built the organization.²⁸

While Davis confirms that similarities between both organizations include like-mindedness, consciousness, consistency and openness,²⁹ Khozoei confirms that for AAA, an organization that began as a “meme Facebook account” and blossomed into a serious social justice organization that is committed to solidarity with Australia’s First Nations People, being a majority female or binary, shares many of the same guiding principles of BLM, namely collective value, empathy, loving engagement, and intergenerational. Khozoei, inspired by the way social media was being used by BLM as a “powerful source of truth” to broadcast injustices in real time, before the traditional media outlets were even privy to what was taking place, he felt that this was an effect methodology used by BLM to reach the world. Appreciating that while BLM is centered on

black liberation as a “universal cause” Khozoei believes that it is a step in the direction of freedom for all. Harilaou champions BLM for having given an “articulate” voice in the education of race discrimination experienced by “Blak” people in Australia.³⁰ Given the long history of Australian Aboriginal activists fighting for racial justice for both Indigenous people and other racial minorities, Harilaou believes that BLM has given “a new language and conceptual understanding” of this fight. Believing that standing together is the only way to succeed in real social change, she highlights that BLM can become a staunch opponent of white supremacy and the police state by becoming a “unifier for racial justice.”³¹

With the hindsight that “the power of ordinary people is a phenomenal force for change – now more than ever, popular movements and political resistance is crucial,” in 2017, for the first time in its history, the Sydney Peace Foundation decided to award the Sydney Peace Prize to a movement – BLM – and not an individual person.³² In their reasoning, the Sydney Peace foundation stated that they celebrate BLM for, “building a powerful movement for racial equality, courageously reigniting a global conversation around state violence and racism. And for harnessing the potential of new platforms and power of people to inspire a bold movement for change at a time when peace is threatened by growing inequality and injustice.”³³ Further, the Sydney Peace Foundation highlighted that they have chosen to honor BLM for redirecting history and for offering “bold and visionary solutions to build societies where Black people, and by extension all people, are free to live safe and dignified lives.”³⁴ The Sydney Peace Foundation championed their ability to force society, particularly their own Australian society’s inability to “come to terms” with their discriminatory past, to rethink race and discrimination while turning “a radically inclusive message into a rallying cry for millions of people requires vision, leadership, heart and courage.”³⁵

In her acceptance speech, Khan-Cullors was clear in identifying what BLM has come to symbolize nationally and internationally, specifically “a declaration, a cry of rage, a sharing of light. It has become a movement that is international, worldwide in its scope of liberation for Black and oppressed people everywhere.”³⁶ In conveying her understanding of the connections between African Americans and those who have been traditionally marginalized in Australia, Patrisse Khan-Cullors further states that “BLM committing to be a part of the long legacy of global Black struggle in solidarity with the Indigenous People of Australia, South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islander People.”³⁷ Persuaded that while the movement is monumental, it is not a new struggle in Australia, for Davis, its appeal was in the cry that black lives matter and that it commanded a “global connectedness and global consciousness.” For her, the cry made it clear that the Australian South Sea Islanders were not alone in their struggles but were in fact part of a larger “family” that is an extension of slavery. As an example, and similar to Michelle Alexander, who argues that systems of oppression don’t die out once challenged instead they simply reinvent themselves,³⁸ Davis explains how for South Sea Islanders being hired as extremely low wage indentured workers was Slavery in another form, but the current mass incarceration crisis is felt by black people throughout the world. She feels the term is “perfect” and “powerful” for all movements, and while people have adopted it in various ways, for Davis what is most visible is that it is about black people reclaiming their body and pride.³⁹

While in Sydney to accept their prize, BLM, in an effort to experience “a deep and profound insight to some of the social justice issues affecting Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) peoples,” participated in successful Australian South Sea Islanders – Port Jackson coordinated and hosted, forum with First Nations mothers who lost their children to deaths while in custody, Davis recalled that Patrisse Khan-Cullors and several BLM

members attended and spoke, requesting that they speak only after First Nations Peoples and Australian South Sea Islanders testified about their losses. After receiving backlash from other Australian grassroots organization on claims that BLM involvement was only momentary, after attending the forum these organizations were persuaded otherwise. After which, having been invited to the fundraiser for the Sydney Peace Prize event hosted at the Sydney Town Hall NSW, where Khan-Cullors read out just some of the names of Black Murders in Custody in solidarity with First Nations and Australian South Sea Islanders peoples. Davis and the Australian South Sea Islanders-Port Jackson witnessed the emotions of philanthropic and “privileged” attendees of the fundraiser and heard their questions of why all lives did not matter. Loving the “strength and tenacity” of their response statements, Davis was captivated by Khan-Cullors and other BLM members, calling their address “profound” in the room of connected corporate and grassroots organizations.⁴⁰

Further noting that “absolutely nothing stays the same, and experience is experience,” Davis, was “honored and overwhelmed” by Khan-Cullors and Rodney Diverlus’ commitment to include the work of ASSI-PJ and Blackbirding history on the BLM webpage. She further encourages BLM to travel and continue on with bilateral conversations and relationship, staying connected on social media more broadly – which in her opinion is the largest tool available to all organizations in self-determination. While Davis feels that BLM has changed things by shifting perspectives and awakening consciousness, she is of the opinion that there is still much work to be done. Specifically, for Australia South Sea Islanders, rebuilding of trust with the Indigenous and First Nations People is key because these communities are the most marginalized and considering “different cultural thinking” (like acknowledgment of country and acknowledgment of First Nations perspective). Davis, noting that activism work is “conscious work,” maintains, like

Harilaou and Khozoei, that capacity building for First Nation people and acknowledgement of the African Slave trade are equally important as part of a “Global memory.”⁴¹

With African Americans having such an impactful history with the slave trade, Davis notes that as people of color, black Australians have always looked to America for inspiration. Mentioning that Angela Davis is a frequent traveler to Australia, Davis highlights that the African American struggle is very inspirational not just for Australian South Sea Islanders but for the world, and has an amazing effect on pride, identity, and self-righteousness. Feeling that BLM is a “contemporary version” of the Black Panthers movement, she confirms that the Civil Rights Era and black power movements had a great influence on the First Nation struggle. She highlighted that BLM is a contemporary version and continuum of the Civil Rights Era. Using the black theatre in Australia during the 1970s as example, Davis explained that its creation was a result of First Nations Peoples and Australian South Sea Islanders traveling to Black Panther movement and looking at what was taking place there.⁴²

In keeping with Black Liberation, for Davis, race is “relevant and important” because it is necessary to be conscious of history in order to move forward. She asserts that black lives matter is a “call for unity” solely because “black lives matter and that’s a fact.” Declaring that “we are all people of color and are all black people,” Davis concludes that if we look at issues as a “black issue” it becomes very inclusive. In her opinion capacity building becomes easy with this inclusivity, in that the youth don’t somehow feel the movements don’t represents their group. Discussing more on race, Davis argues that there are often internal politics between different races within an organization. Expressing her frustration with such politics, she notes that sometimes “we are too busy pulling each other down a lot of the time rather than working together and building each other up.” Ultimately, for Davis the identity of the oppressor is irrelevant because it is

oppression that is “still a black lives matter issue.”⁴³

Believing that the African American struggle is a “broad umbrella” as well as the “struggle of our time,” Khozoei affirms that BLM is now the “statement of our time.” In his opinion, the Black Liberation movement is at the heart of the fight for decolonization, and the pathway to real liberation, where we fight for “some kind of freedom where we don’t have to call it freedom anymore.” He considers the “Civil Rights Movement, the Black Panther movement, and now BLM,” to be “primarily inspirational” and within the “same tradition” of anti-colonialism. Therefore, Khozoei believes that race is primary because of the way the world has been structured and as a result black people are at the “center of liberation.” For him, this world structure has led to black people being at the bottom of a human hierarchy and are subsequently “the most burdened” people when it comes to race. He declares that while “capital is the organizing rationality of the world; anti-blackness is the organizing irrationality of the world.” That is to say, while many may feel that class is the fundamental struggle, an argument that is easily made, the underlining structure is “anti-blackness” which is often discounted. In Australia, Khozoei notes that racism happens quietly in a “genocidal” manner to Indigenous and First Nations people through “Deaths in Custody” and “Stolen Generations.”⁴⁴

For Khozoei, one of the most inspirational and powerful things about BLM was the way it focused on one issue around identity while simultaneously “speaking for [the liberation of] all [marginalized] people.” He declares that in order for this idea to rain true without having to utter the colorblind “All Lives Matter” statement, means to have a true understanding of what intersectionality means. He declares that to make a statement that is inclusive of every struggle “thinking intersectionally” is key. Highlighting AAA’s own intersectionality, which includes mixed races, queer and disabled members, Khozoei notes that while they are in Australia as “Asian

subjects” they are committed to solidarity with First Nations people.⁴⁵ Harilaou feels, discussing how “intersectionality of movements” is crucial in the fight for social justice globally and how her involvement with the Anticolonial Asian Alliance is an example of “intersectionality of movements,” that unless the cries of the First Nations people are heard, no voices will be heard in Australia, noting that as a movement it is important to know “that our oppressions are linked and our liberations are too.” Harilaou believes that BLM has been transformed itself by “intersectionality of movements,” stating that the internet has allowed BLM to “form solidarity and connections” as well as share the tactics used by oppressive forces.⁴⁶

In line with Harilaou and Khozoei, Davis argues that there are many like-minded people who are ready and willing to collaborate with others in a respectful and self-determining way – key to Davis is respect for cultural diversity and those cultural frameworks that we live and breathe as everyday people. Finding intersectionality to be important to a point where success is dependent on it, Davis spoke of her own organization’s intersectional activities, particularly with the Jewish groups advocating on the effects of the Holocaust. She notes that they ultimately “try to cross over into other community demographics” to share information, “network opportunities [and] importantly the truth telling” history with others. While Davis understands that working in “silos” is often more practical when considering a lack of resources, she finds that this can often lead to narrowmindedness. For her, there is a “domino effect” when organizations work together and share information and personal experiences. Further, Davis believes connecting has had a positive effect in that information and stories are being shared and recognized – reaching a broader audience. For her, the more we help each other the better life will be in the future.⁴⁷

ASSI-PJ has historically been advocating on behalf of Indigenous and First Nations People. BLM has continued to inspire them to continue in their advocacy and activism by putting the

conversation about race at the forefront. Inspired to the point that they are willing to create history to award the Sydney Peace Prize to the movement is proof that a mark has been made in Australia. This mark can now expand into a deeper intersectionality between both BLM and the important movements of the Indigenous and First Nations People in Australia.

Chapter 5: Emerald City: Europe - Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, and France

Healing justice allows us a place to practice the care with each other that we each deserve.¹

Healing Justice Reason #8

The last, but not final, stop on our journey towards international intersectionality of movements on the “social justice yellow brick road,” is Emerald City. Considered the “official imperial capital of the entire country” of Oz.² Ironically accurate, the Emerald City is Europe, the imperial continent of the world. It is important to highlight that the “yellow brick road” in The Wizard of Oz connects directly to Munchkin Country, or Africa, and so Europe is connected to Africa historically. In Europe we hear a first-hand account of how the Afro-European community feels “invisible” but is on a path to complete and proud acknowledgment of a “Black Europe.” Having directly worked with the founders of BLM on several occasions, European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD) Executive Director Esther Mamadou-Blanco in Spain; ENPAD co-founder Michael McEachrane in Sweden; and ENPAD member and The Black Archives co-founder Jessica de Abreu in The Netherlands, testify to how BLM has interacted with ENPAD through workshops and debates while also inspiring their ongoing activism against anti-blackness. Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR) member Selim Nadi, like the members of ENPAD, interested in the political demands of the movement, also testifies to the impact of BLM in France.

Originally from London, UK, Black Lives Matter-Vancouver founder Cicely Blain, in her article “Here’s Why Black Lives Matter in a Global Context,” notes that while BLM “focuses largely on ending police violence towards Black people in America... [it has] blossomed into a twenty-first century Black liberation movement, unrestricted by borders.”³ She also notes that Britain and Canada often “find themselves...denying the existence of racism within their borders.”⁴ Amien Essif notes that things are changing in Europe and in his article, “Black Lives

Matter ... in Europe, Too,” specifically states that “according to a June 2012 briefing paper from the UK Race and Europe Network...racist stereotypes about skin color are prevalent in Europe, and ‘anecdotal and country-specific evidence shows that people of African descent are consistently and disproportionately discriminated against’ in everything from housing to employment.”⁵ As a result, Amien Essif highlights, “it’s not hard to see why BLM [currently] resonates” and that “organizers from London, Paris, Berlin and Amsterdam...[believe that]...European solidarity with Black Lives Matter goes beyond sympathy for black Americans. Rather, it is part of a movement to end racist policing in Europe.”⁶

In his article “The “migrant crisis” as racial crisis: do Black Lives Matter in Europe?” Nicholas De Genova notes that two particular movements in Europe have been inspired by the Black Lives Matter Global Movement: “Migrant Lives Matter” and “Berlin’s Ferguson is Everywhere.”⁷ In De Genova’s discussion of the “Migrant Lives Matter” movement he notes that similar to the idea of “Black Lives Matter” being in question in the United States, the idea of “Migrant Lives Matter[ing]” is also in question in Europe as many migrant and refugees escaping mistreatment in their countries are met with deadly violence on their arrival to many European nations.⁸ De Nova, echoing Angela Davis, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, and Cicely Blain (who in their article notes that “Black Lives Matter is also a global movement because it requires international solidarity”⁹) highlights the importance of connecting struggles, particularly between the United States and Britain. He writes,

It is noteworthy that we have also witnessed the emergence in Britain of a fledgling but spirited BLM, explicitly dedicated to an anti-racist internationalist solidarity with the struggles against racist police brutality and murder in the United States, as well as elaborating a global analysis that links systemic racial oppression in the United States with

racist policing and state violence in Britain.¹⁰

While De Nova stresses the importance of “political self-understandings and critical analyses” during this period of “trans-Atlantic reverberations,” he is careful to emphasize that, like Brazilians, Europeans have had a history of fighting for the rights of the racially marginalized long before the Black Lives Matter Global Movement.¹¹ On the other hand, and also similar to Brazilians, Europeans have been encouraged by the movements taking place in the United States, which have had an empowering effect on their own “longstanding anti-racist” movements. De Nova writes, “it is unmistakable that the Black Lives Matter struggles in the United States have had a direct energizing effect on these parallel European movements.”¹² In his discussion of Berlin’s “Ferguson is Everywhere” campaign to “denounce the killing of people of colour by German police,” De Nova notes that while it was “directly inspired by struggles in the United States,” it developed as a result of “longstanding anti-racist struggles in Europe” fought by such organizations as Berlin’s European Network of People of African Descent.¹³

Established in Berlin in 2014, the European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD) was originally organized, with the assistance of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), to “build a network of organizations for people of African Descent in Europe and to create a Demand Catalogue prior to the European Elections in May 2014.”¹⁴ Initial signing parties included organizations from Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Sweden, Slovenia, France, Spain, Greece, The Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, The Netherlands, Malta, and Austria.¹⁵ Today, the first “Network objective” listed on the ENPAD official website is “To start a Pan-European Black Movement for the implementation of the respect and recognition of the dignity, equality and human rights of People of African Descent in Europe,”¹⁶ but objectives to “empower Black People at every level of society, including culturally, and spiritually” is also listed.¹⁶ The ENPAD official

website proudly displays the photographs of several people in “Berlin showing solidarity with Ferguson, drawing attention to police brutality in Europe” by posing with signs that read “#Ferguson is Everywhere” and that read the names of victims of police brutality in both the United States and Europe, Berlin and Amsterdam particularly.¹⁷ The website also highlights that the organization is currently working on topics such as blackfacing and racial profiling.¹⁸ Notably, the website also stresses the importance of “connect[ing] the dots” of different campaigns.¹⁹ On March 26, 2019, the hard work of ENPAD paid off, and success was theirs in addressing existing institutional racism in Europe, with the passing of European Parliament resolution on Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent in Europe (2018/2899(RSP)) a “landmark resolution [that according to the law itself] calls on Member States and EU institutions “to recognise that People of African Descent are particularly subjected to racism, discrimination, xenophobia (Afrophobia), and generally the unequal enjoyment of human and fundamental rights, amounting to structural racism; and are entitled to protection from these inequities as individuals and as a group, including positive measures for the promotion, full and equal enjoyment of their rights.”²⁰

Currently, the members of ENPAD include organizations from Denmark, Ireland, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Sweden.²¹ Speaking with ENPAD Executive Director Esther Mamadou-Blanco, a veteran activist for migrant and refugee rights based in Spain, she recalled the first moment she heard of BLM during the Ferguson protests. She spoke of the way BLM and protests were broadcasted into the mainstream – she was in essence attracted to the “visual of [the] black struggle.” For Mamadou-Blanco, the emerging movement amplified and made open the debate on violence and racism against black people. She was impressed at the speed at which the movement spread and was immediately encouraged to continue speaking to the world about the similar issues they faced in Europe. Mamadou-Blanco felt

emboldened to be more political and “unapologetic” in her own movements in Europe, convinced that others shared her sentiment.²²

Professor Michael McEachrane, who wrote articles one, five, six, seven, and twenty of the European Parliament’s March 26, 2019 resolution on Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent in Europe (2018/2899(RSP)), is a researcher at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights based in Sweden, veteran activist and co-founder of the European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD). McEachrane declared BLM to be the “biggest movement for black people’s rights since the Civil Rights Movement.” He acknowledges that while it was initially a political movement focusing on police brutality, strategically through mass protests, its media appeal enabled it to become an “international” sensation and inspiration. In his opinion, the BLM cry became an international “signal” for black people to “mobilize, demonstrate, and protest that black lives do matter.” For McEachrane, the declaration that black lives matter was “expressed in different ways and for different reasons” but ultimately had the same message throughout Europe was powerful. For McEachrane, BLM and message generated “excitement and inspiration” in Europe and Sweden via the visual of black people standing up in mass demonstrations.²³

Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR) – a political group created in 2005 in France whose website states that they seek to influence both French society and its public policies by “constructing an independent indigenous political force” through the bringing together many marginalized populations in France, namely Black, Arabs and Moslems (Muslims) using an “anti-racist” and “decolonial” philosophy²⁴ – member and PhD candidate, Selim Nadi, notes that mainstream medias in France view BLM in a “rather positive way.” For him, with BLM’s reach being international he believes it has allowed the movement to “transform” into “a rather inoffensive phenomenon” which is at the same time a “danger” to the institution of racism in the

United States.²⁵

Before recently becoming co-founder of The Black Archives, one of the first historical archives in The Netherlands that addresses issues about colonialism, race, and slavery, an anthropologist by trade, Jessica de Abreu began her activism career as a member of New Urban Collective, a student organization and network for people of African descent. As a member of ENPAD, who she describes as an organization that connects different organizations to combat the reality that black people in Europe are seemingly “invisible” in their individual nations but are “more visible as Black Europe,” de Abreu, agreeing with Mamadou-Blanco and McEachrane, recalled the 2014 fatal shooting of Michael Brown as the moment she first became aware of BLM. Taking to the streets in protest at a Black Lives Matter protest in Amsterdam, de Abreu also noted this was also the moment she met ENPAD co-founder, Jamie Schearer, whose mentorship helped her to realize she wanted to add to the movement. In de Abreu’s opinion, BLM, although started in the United States as an avenue to address local police violence, has inspired many international movements to address issues that people of African descent face. She further acknowledged that BLM became a symbol for black communities globally to address these issues, noting that even if a single movement does not involve police brutality the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter would still be used.²⁶

After discovering that activism was a calling of hers, de Abreu organized many demonstrations in The Netherlands’ against The Netherlands’ most pressing race relations problem – “blackfacing.” Part of the Dutch Christmas, blackfacing is a famous national tradition in The Netherlands where white people bedeck themselves with blackface makeup, afro wigs, red lips, and large earrings, under the guise of an 1850 children’s tradition that emerged during the Dutch colonial empire’s period of slavery. Now considered a key symbol for institutional racism in The

Netherlands de Abreu, along with many activists in The Netherlands, have dedicated herself to its demise.²⁷

While Mamadou-Blanco and McEachrane have witnessed the inspiration felt from BLM via direct organizing with the founders of the movement in Spain and Sweden, respectively, de Abreu has witnessed this inspiration differently. Noting that he is personally aware of people who, inspired by BLM, created their own solidarity protests and their own Black Lives Matter protests throughout Sweden (two of which were in Stockholm), McEachrane recalled meeting Opal Tometi for the first time at a UN Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent in 2015 in Geneva. As a co-founder of ENPAD, he also recalled ENPAD organizing an event titled “Rights of People of African Descent,” as a part of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights’ 2018 Fundamental Rights Forum in Vienna in September of 2018 to which Opal took part in.²⁸ What Mamadou-Blanco found most advantageous at the workshop was the way it gave her and her organization “a new way to strategize” on how to make their protests more “global and coordinated,” adding that any language barriers are not barriers at all but an advantage to expansion with the youth.²⁹ Describing her direct involvement with BLM, de Abreu recalled that between 2015 and 2016, she met with Opal Tometi in New York before flying her to The Netherlands to participate in a University event with Jamie Schearer. In 2017, Patrisse Khan-Cullors traveled to The Netherlands also after having been invited by a “white institution” to collaboratively debate with de Abreu, to which she invited Khan-Cullors to The Black Archives after the debate.³⁰

With there being many outlets to battle racism in The Netherlands, de Abreu has ensured that she is involved in as many of these outlets as possible. Now a board member of the New Urban Collective she discussed how it became a space where many black students collectively noticed what “structural problems,” such as access to higher education, plagued black communities in The

Netherlands. Accrediting BLM for “reopening” the issue of anti-black racism, as The Black Archives does, globally, she noted that in The Netherlands “blackfacing” is the priority race issue. Highlighting that although the BLM hashtag is often used, even frequently by her own organization, she confirmed that there isn’t really a BLM within The Netherlands. The organizing against traditional “blackfacing,” according to her, has been used by activists as a “vehicle to address institutional racism,” making the 2011 symbolic hashtag #BlackPeteIsRacist, or #ZwartePietIsRacisme, The Netherland’s version of #BlackLivesMatter. Confirming that the development of this particular hashtag is “very connected” to BLM, de Abreu explained that Zwarte Piet was initially protested against by two activists with shirts that stated that this tradition was racist. These activists, according to de Abreu were “brutally arrested.” In de Abreu’s opinion, this instance, and many similar instances, of police violence and oppression highlights the reason this movement against blackfacing is a “direct link” to BLM.³¹ In addition to violence, the matter of politics also arises in the opinion of activists in France. Nadi of PIR believes that BLM is an “organized movement” and therefore a political matter. For Nadi, the mere “existence” of BLM is a challenge to the entire U.S. political system. A political system that African Americans have endlessly struggled against.³²

In McEachrane’s opinion, the African American struggle “has been [inspirational] for a long time for various reasons,” and, citing the black power movement, Malcolm X, and black music, he believes that it still is.³³ Agreeing with McEachrane and confirming her belief that the African American struggle is in fact a primary source of inspiration, in de Abreu’s opinion “if people give black women a chance to run this world, I think we would come with a lot of revolutionary thoughts.” On the other hand, while she feels that the African American struggle is a “great starting point,” she believes that this in part due to the U.S. being a “very dominate culture

[that] impacts the whole world.” For her, this domination comes with both advantages and disadvantages. According to de Abreu, while advantages include inspiration from Civil Rights Era leaders for those who feel blackness is “invisible,” it also includes disadvantages like the Dutch rallying against the racism made visible in the U.S. and forgetting their own history of black European history in The Netherlands. Noting that now, for the first time in history, it is documented and celebrated that black citizens of The Netherlands are “fighting to rewrite their own black history,” and now their own “Black Europe or Black European” history, complete with freedom fighters and black women on the forefronts.³⁴

Highlighting the colorblind agenda of The Netherlands and frustrated with the discourse on “blackness” being dominated by the U.S. and U.K. perspective, de Abreu finds that much is not known or discussed on the perspectives or happenings of the smaller countries within Europe. While she recalls that intersectionality of movements was originally meant to highlight the struggles of black women, she believes that race is one of the core things to consider when intersecting movements. When it comes to race, de Abreu believes that people would give you a “different world view[s] on what it means to live with a different color.” She believes that race is important in intersecting movements because it “gives a different reality, a different understanding, [and] a different analysis of how the world works.”³⁵ Interested in culture as well, McEachrane believes race is important, particularly in Sweden, which eliminated the term race from its anti-discrimination legislation to enforce a more colorblind society.³⁶ In Nadi’s opinion race plays a huge role considering that the French state has “supported moral antiracism” and continues to be “very afraid of Arabs or Blacks who organized politically” due to the racism embedded within the French state.³⁷

McEachrane also champions black feminism for intersectionality but believes that “justice

is justice” irrespective of identity politics.³⁸ Mamadou-Blanco, on the other hand, highlighted that inclusion of intersectionality in social justice is “principle” noting that failure to fight together results in failure to achieve “global liberation.” In discussing race and intersectionality, she mentioned that race is important in terms of the colonial-indoctrinated use of “colorism.” Discussing the impact of “colorism” she acknowledged that in Europe, similar to Brazil, the darker your skin the easier you and your concerns are to be “dismissed.” Frustrated with the workings of the system, Mamadou-Blanco noted that in addition to “colorism” class is also decisive on the kind of life a person of color will ultimately live.³⁹

McEachrane, while in his support for intersectionality he declares that “justice is justice, whoever’s it is,” believes in the idea of intersectionality revealing that often times there are “legitimate grounds for justice” which overlap. For him, it is important to understand this overlap, or intersection, because black liberation requires thinking in intersectional terms. Importantly, McEachrane highlighted that intersectionality is important in its ability to prevent a “self-centered” agenda where ultimately if justice for one is the goal, then justice for all is necessary.⁴⁰ Further on intersectionality, de Abreu, believes that while movements and steps are being taken, we have a long way to go before “intersectionality” ultimately becomes a “verb” and not just “a word.” Specifically, she declares that there is a lot of work to do largely to highlight what it means to be in a marginalized community and further to be, who Yengde Advocates for, the “marginalized of the marginalized.” Believing that “intersectionality” is the future and the “revolution,” de Abreu discussed what she has learned from Opal Tometi and Patrisse Khan-Cullors, is that while patriarchy still plays a hand in who controls the protests, learning how to re-center the marginalized population will ultimately be beneficial for everyone.⁴¹

As “Black Europe” continues to find its voice, we can see how it has interacted with BLM.

Even with a call to clearly define “blackness,” intersectionality is already taking place between BLM and the Emerald City of Europe. With continued connections, intersectionality with Europe can flourish and may even become an influence in and of itself.

Conclusion: The Wizard of Oz - Intersectionality

Healing allows us to move away from scarcity and fear and into connection and choice.¹

Healing Justice Reason #2

When Dorothy and friends finally make it to the Wizard of Oz, they pour their hearts desires out to the Wizard. All countries traveled, it's time to meet the Wizard of Intersectionality of Movements. With many concerns globally on this path, or "social justice yellow brick road" to intersectionality of movements, it is important that we give the Wizard of Oz all concerns so that we can collaboratively bring this journey to a close. These suggestions pinpoint how BLM can continue to positively transform its own movement and give a clear picture of what the organization will need to truly be global.

From Africa, it is expressed that ultimately intersectionality is about "depoliticizing the struggle." Further, it is suggested that each organization acknowledge that a larger organization, like BLM, can bring a tremendous amount to the table, a fact that can be ignored if focus is placed on the wrong factors. Approaches should be fine-tuned to ensure that an organizations' request for intersectionality proves vital as opposed to proving to be just a program. BLM is encouraged to never give up and to continue organizing by looking at all different agendas that acknowledge racism in a local and international setting. With the success of the #RhodesMustFall movement in South Africa, and the subsequent removal of Confederate monuments in America, BLM needs to remember that solidarity must be reciprocal and transparent.

For the Americas, BLM is reminded that as its own organization may have started with help from other movements like the Arab Spring, the movement can continue in its transformation by continuing to exchange information both locally and globally with organizations and individual activists who are interested in this "global dialogue," like the Brazilians. This global dialogue

should include cases of violence that resemble those in the U.S. BLM is encouraged to seek real systemic change outside of protesting and to think about other strategies that are centered on building relationships and more grassroots organizations. It is advise that this will help build the movement's "strength" even in the United States.

Regarding Asia, with the Indian Dalit movements ready and willing to connect, and continue connecting, BLM is advised to "de-Americanize" the organization and, similar to the Black Panthers, make an effort to reach across borders without prompt in the form an "international outreach unit." This way, the movement can focus on black liberation while also connecting with various other solidarity movements. Further, BLM is advised that a "cut across strong barriers" will aid in increasing the movement's numbers, and therefore their strength. Theoretically, the stronger the movement the faster the route to successful organizing.

With Australia, the importance of Aboriginal and Indigenous rights must be added to BLM agenda. A direct, in-person conversation must take place between the movement and Aboriginal and Indigenous People on every continent to ensure that their rights and concerns are not left out of the agenda, but also so that any conflicts with Aboriginal or Indigenous People can be resolved. On advice, to forget them is to forget the history and heritage, or "what really matters," on each continent.

In Europe, while it is suggested that migrant, refugee, and Arab rights be included on agenda, a thorough analysis of what "blackness" means both in America and for the rest of the world should be included in BLM. Noting that after much protest from "Black Europe," the United Nations has adopted a resolution on the "elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance" which ultimately "urges all States to work together to protect individuals against acts of violence, discrimination and hate crimes based on racism, racial discrimination,

xenophobia and related intolerance”² on April 2, 2019, others in Europe believe that participation in the United Nations 2015-2024 International Decade for People of African Descent – which according to the initiatives website is “provides a solid framework for the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development,”³ – will result in “real political change” in the form of a “Pan-African Congress.” For this reason, BLM is encouraged to want and have concrete demands that can result in “actual revolution.”

In giving these suggestions to the movement, a “beacon of hope,” or the “overarching” agenda, is created. To be clear, the “beacon of hope” is not the collective suggestions, it is not even the reasonable expectation, based on interactions and inspirations, that these suggestions will be incorporated into BLM. Instead it is the idea that various activists and organizations across the globe feel compelled to give these suggestions to BLM at all. After all, they could all just pat the organization on the back for a job well done and continue to work in their own little “silos.” But they can’t, because the cry of BLM has forever changed the way they organize. Let’s face it, who wouldn’t want to stay devoted and attached to that?

In the Wizard of Oz, the Wizard turns out to be powerless and Dorothy realizes that her whole journey was a dream. For intersectionality of movements to take place, this journey, and these pieces of advice cannot be powerless and cannot be a dream. For real change to take place, these connections suggest that this must become *thee* reality. As John Selders, Jr. states, we must come together to strengthen ourselves, because the powers that seek to continue killing, abusing, and living off of the marginalized, will join together and strengthen each other. Thus far, the research shows that a prime way to get to intersectionality is to acknowledge that BLM, although

flawed and in need of continued growth, is the “social justice yellow brick road.” This movement has spread inspiration on five continents and ultimately if we can use this movement to connect struggles, we should. As Wandile Kasibe discussed generational opportunities to partake in the fight for social justice, this movement is our generation’s opportunity to take part⁴ and we should build and connect off of it. It can be done jointly, holding each other together, following the yellow brick road.

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